



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

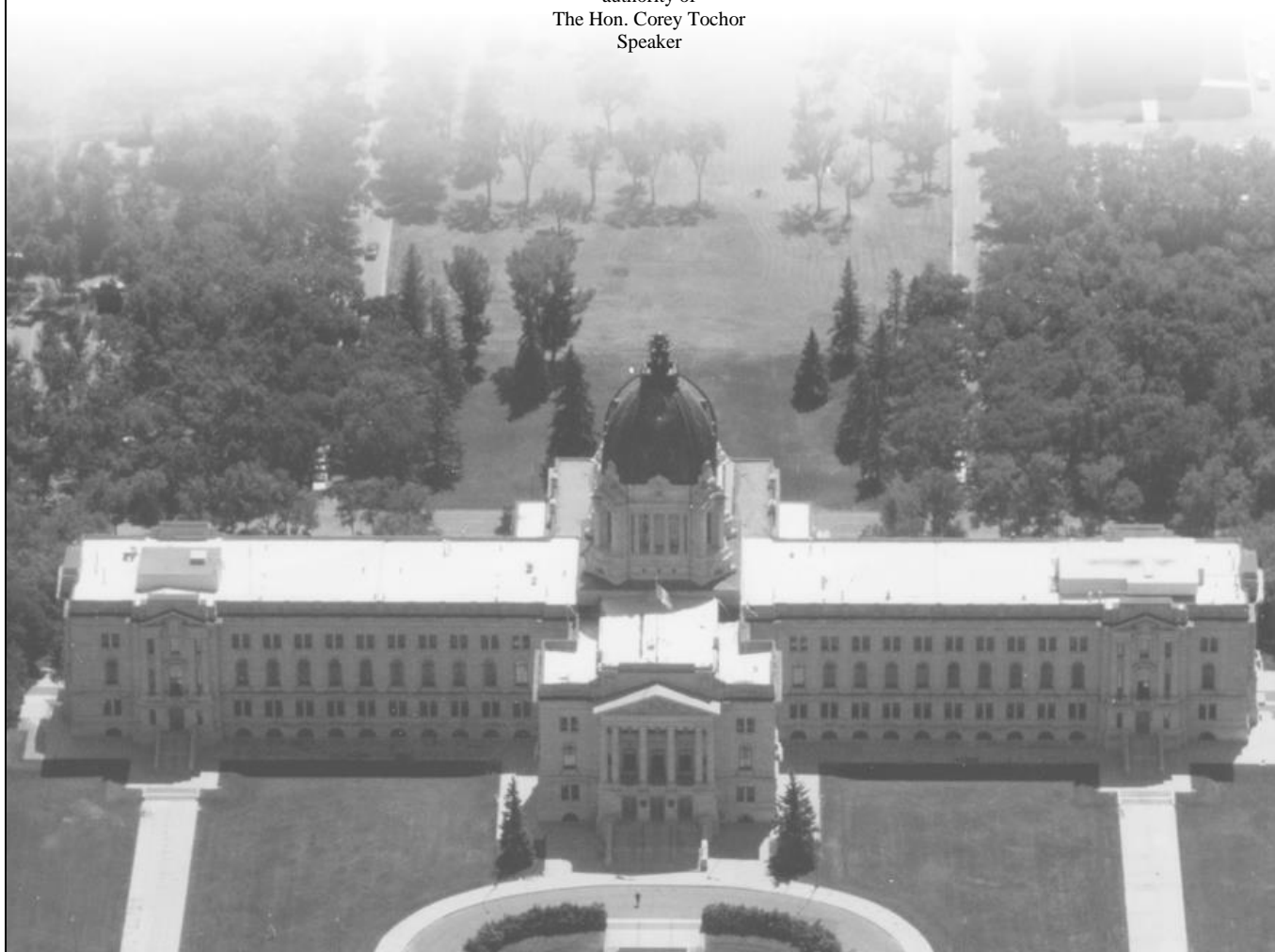
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Corey Tochor
Speaker



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

Speaker — Hon. Corey Tochor

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Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)

Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)

Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

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

Clerks-at-the-Table

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before introductions of the day I will be tabling the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner's report under section 23 of the Act, and the Ombudsman's report under section 38 of that Act.

I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I would ask for leave to make a statement regarding the National Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job. Mr. Speaker, as part of this, the member for Saskatoon Centre will be making part of it, then I will complete after it, with leave of course.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the minister.

COMMEMORATIVE STATEMENTS

National Day of Mourning

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is the National Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job. Across Canada, groups will gather to remember those who lost their lives from workplace illness or incident. Our flags will fly at half-mast here at the Legislative Building and vigils will be held throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, the Day of Mourning is a time to respectfully honour and mourn those lost and to express our condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues who are grieving. It is impossible to imagine the pain that they must deal with every day. The Day of Mourning also serves to remind us about the importance of workplace health and safety. While we can never bring back those who lost their lives, I hope we can learn something from their loss. Each and every one of us is responsible for safety. We all need to take care of each other.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all colleagues here in the legislature to renew their personal commitments to safety and to remember each day to consider safety in all that they do. I ask everyone in Saskatchewan to make that same commitment. Whether or not a person is the employer or the employee, regardless of the industry you work in or the size of the company you work for, please consider the health and safety of everyone and make protecting them a priority.

While our injury rate has been declining, it remains unacceptably high. We will never be complacent, as there is no acceptable level of injuries. Even one is one too many. Our goal continues to be Mission: Zero — zero injuries, zero suffering. Safety, quite simply, should be what we do around here, part of our personal and workplace culture. We all need to arrive home safely at the end of the day to spend time with family and

friends and be active members of our communities.

In 2016 the Workers' Compensation Board reported that 31 people lost their lives as a result of workplace injuries or illnesses, as well as one workplace fatality not covered by WCB [Workers' Compensation Board]. Some of those people suffered from and ultimately lost their battles with health issues caused by exposure to asbestos years ago.

We have learned from their suffering, and we have taken steps to prevent future asbestos-related fatalities through the recently introduced asbestos registry. For others, though their lives were cut short by preventable incidences, none of these deaths should have happened.

The names we honour today are being read into the official record and will be inscribed in the national registry at the Canadian Labour Congress in Ottawa.

I ask that all members please rise while we read the names of those who've lost their lives:

John Jenkins	Austyn Schenstead
Dennis Baschuk	Chance Horan
Ian McLaughlin	Kenneth Shaw
Dustin Pratt	David Wasyliv
William Welsh	Chad Wiklun
Joel Fersch	Samuel Thomas
Eric Ndayishimiye	Mike Kucik
Rick Brown	

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite will read the next 17 names.

Mr. Forbes: —

Francis Rodier	George Reimer
Clayton Matyjanka	Harvie Hawkes
Murray Goodman	David Davies
Richard Machinski	Che Bonter
Mervin Morrow	Joseph Kuntz
Arlene Hubick	John Young
Orville Stainer	Archie Procyshyn
Virgil Ernst	

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I would also like to make special mention of teaching assistant Marie Janvier, and teacher Adam Wood, as teachers are exempt from WCB coverage. Both of those people were killed in the La Loche school shooting.

Not included among these names are the people who lost their lives working on Saskatchewan farms and ranches each year. Today we honour their memories as well.

On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, I offer our sincere condolences to the family and friends who are grieving their losses. Mr. Speaker, to commemorate the Day of Mourning, I ask that we observe a moment of silence in this House.

[The Assembly observed a moment of silence.]

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments.

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce a good friend of mine and a constituent, Mr. Dave Fischl. He's seated in your west gallery. Thanks, Dave. Dave is a retired Ministry of Highways worker where he was the fleet services manager and workplace diversity coordinator. In that position Dave won an award, Premier's Award for Excellence, for his work with workplace diversity and inclusion and because he started a program for individuals with cognitive disabilities . . . [inaudible] . . . and people with all kinds of disabilities for inclusion in the workplace.

Mr. Speaker, since his retirement, Dave continues to be an advocate for inclusion in the workplace, and he goes all over North America speaking about it, Mr. Speaker, for he still is very strongly committed to the workplace. And in fact he's going over to Nova Scotia for two weeks to work for the government there in inclusion and First Nations with their government, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like everyone to join me in welcoming Dave to his Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, most people think of Souls Harbour Rescue Mission as a soup kitchen, and while hope begins with a meal, Souls Harbour does so much more. They help our most vulnerable with emergency shelter, Mr. Speaker, free clothing, a daycare, youth programming, addictions, and affordable housing. Most importantly, every guest is treated with dignity and compassion.

It's my great pleasure to introduce some members for Souls Harbour who are in the gallery opposite us today, Mr. Speaker. They are Joseph Miller, the executive director of Souls Harbour. If you just give a wave, Joseph. Michael was here. I don't see him now, but Michael Towers was also with us. Rebecca Cochrane, director of programs is with us today. Katrina Robinson, the director of development is with us today; and Kari Weiss, the director of finance.

I would ask all members to join me in welcoming these fine individuals to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to join with the minister in welcoming the folks here from Souls Harbour Regina Rescue Mission. This is an organization that has done a tremendous amount of work, tremendous amount of good work over the years, Mr. Speaker. And certainly, they take the charge to love thy neighbour as thyself very seriously and in such a positive way. So it's really good to see them here today at their Legislative Assembly, and certainly

folks that are always very busy.

And it's also interesting to see Joe from this perspective. Usually when Joe's that high up, he's on the roof over on Dewdney Avenue raising money to fight homelessness in August, Mr. Speaker. But it's really good to see Joe, and Katrina, Rebecca, Kari, and we'll see Michael again, I'm sure.

But this is an organization that has a tremendous amount of good impact on the community, Mr. Speaker, and it's really good to see them here today at their Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sitting in the west gallery, I'd like to introduce some students and their teachers from Moose Jaw. École Ducharme has brought 16 grade 5 and 6 students. They're accompanied by their teacher, Madame Marie-Chantal Poulin; and their teacher aid, Madame Nicole Cochrane. I'd like to ask all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise again today to present a petition opposing the Sask Party's cuts to spiritual care. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners are under the impression that the government has no idea what the role of spiritual care workers, professional spiritual care workers do in our health region facilities, nor did the government know the impact this cut would have on people's healing and well-being, Mr. Speaker.

They point out that in this budget the government has eliminated funding for spiritual care services within our health care facilities; that Saskatchewan will be the only province within Canada to not fund this support for patients, residents, and their families seeking wellness. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners point out that the Sask Party hid their plan to scrap funding for spiritual care within health region facilities during the election just over a year ago, Mr. Speaker. They didn't mention a word of that.

The petitioners point out that spiritual care responds to the spiritual and emotional needs of patients and residents and provides a compassionate listening presence in times of crisis, Mr. Speaker; and that spiritual care supports families, patients, residents, and staff in their difficult times, Mr. Speaker; and that spiritual care can provide support for all families, patients, and residents, regardless of faith or belief, in obtaining comfort and support.

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 immediately reinstate the funding for spiritual care services in this province's health region facilities.

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

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

Mr. Doke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition from citizens who are opposed to the federal government's decision to impose a carbon tax on the province of Saskatchewan.

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 Shell Lake, Saskatoon, Leask, Canwood, Mont Nebo, North Battleford, Hanley, Osler, Rabbit Lake, Spiritwood. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I stand in my place to answer the call from the member from Prince Albert Northcote for anyone, anyone in the Assembly that would help her in her petition for a second bridge for Prince Albert. And on this side of the Assembly we are very proud to stand with her and present these petitions day after day.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to present a petition on behalf of the city of bridge. And, Mr. Speaker, the need for a second bridge for Prince Albert has never been clearer than it is today. Prince Albert, communities, and people of Northern Saskatchewan, and all the businesses north of Prince Albert that send people and products through Prince Albert require a solution.

And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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

And the people that have signed this petition, as we present page after page, day after day, week after week, month after month, are asking for this second bridge to be built. And on this particular page, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition are primarily from Prince Albert. And I so present.

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

[10:15]

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, I'm rising today to present a petition opposed to the Sask Party plan to scrap and sell off the

Saskatchewan Transportation Company. The people who have signed this petition want to bring to our attention the following: this Sask Party budget unilaterally eliminates the Saskatchewan Transportation Company, an important Crown corporation that provides a crucial service to people across the province who depend on it for travelling, accessing medical services, and shipping important packages. The STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] helps drive the economy with its parcel service that serves farms and other businesses.

And the Sask Party did not inform Saskatchewan people prior to the 2016 election about their plan to scrap STC. That closure leaves 224 people out of work and communities from across the province isolated from each other. Less than a year ago, the then minister said STC is a needed service and that it was safe from sale. STC provides a vital service to many seniors, workers, and families throughout the province. And by scrapping STC out of the blue and without asking the permission of the owners, the Saskatchewan people, the Sask Party is sending a clear sign that other Crowns like SaskTel may be at risk of privatization. The Sask Party is breaking their promise to Saskatchewan people by getting rid of a Crown corporation.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately stop the plan to scrap and sell off the Saskatchewan Transportation Company and to resume transportation services to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed the petition today come from the city of Saskatoon and the town of Borden. I so submit.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition regarding pay equity here in Saskatchewan. The undersigned residents of this province 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 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. 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. 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 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

and within the private sector to eliminate the wage gap between women and men.

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

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud today to stand in my place to present a petition to increase the funding for Prince Albert mobile crisis. Mr. Speaker, Prince Albert mobile crisis has had to close its doors during daytime hours resulting in a loss of resource to people in distress. They've had to make this decision because they lost funding that was provided by this government, and so they're not available during the daytime hours.

And, Mr. Speaker, we've been discussing domestic violence within our province. And we know that Saskatchewan has higher than average domestic violence, but Prince Albert is even higher than that average, Mr. Speaker. And we know that the police services, they do an excellent job at addressing the issues when they present to a situation. And the trained hospital workers at Victoria Hospital do an excellent job as well. But we're missing a link, Mr. Speaker, and that's our crisis intervention workers who are trained to be able to provide that counselling and intervention services in those times of need. And they provide that service to both victims and offenders and ensure that the family unit is getting the support that they need. And that's so crucial, Mr. Speaker, in order to help fight the domestic violence that's in our communities, and I know families would really appreciate that support. So I'm going to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Saskatchewan Party government to increase funding to Prince Albert mobile crisis unit, so they may once again offer 24-hour emergency crisis service.

Mr. Speaker, this is a real issue in Prince Albert, and residents are concerned. And this particular petition is signed by the residents of Prince Albert. I do so present.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a new petition regarding Bill 63 and the threat to local voices in education. Those who've signed this petition wish to draw our attention to the following: that they are opposed to changing *The Education Act* with Bill 63 as it currently reads, until the government takes part in active and good faith, transparent conversation with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association; and that there shall be transparency and agreement upon any changes to *The Education Act*; that it's imperative that the government recognize that there must be an appropriate time frame in which elected board members are able to convey all information regarding decisions affecting their communities; and that they wish that the government would recognize that local school boards are the voice of Saskatchewan communities and that decisions should remain with such elected boards.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan repeal Bill 63 and preserve the governance of elected school boards.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are rolling in from all across the province. The particular pages that I present today are signed by residents of Midale and Weyburn. I do 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 survivors 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 been impacted by interpersonal violence, and for many of them the violence will follow them to their workplace. Employers lose \$77.9 million annually due to the direct and indirect impacts of domestic violence.

And, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has already enacted legislation similar to the private members' bill we've tabled, 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 violence in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing the petition today come from Swift Current, Moose Jaw, and Pilot Butte. I do so submit.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition calling on the government to restore funding to post-secondary education in Saskatchewan. The undersigned residents wish to bring your attention to the following: that the Sask Party is passing on its legacy of debt to students and their families. Students graduating in Saskatchewan already face high levels of debt, having paid among the highest tuition rates in Canada. By cutting \$36.8 million from post-secondary education, funding for scholarships, and cutting the tax rebate for tuition and supplies, the Sask Party is making the likelihood of students graduating with higher levels of debt that will be more difficult for them to overcome even higher. I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately restore funding to Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions and stop the damaging cuts to our students.

The individuals signing the petition today are from Regina and Saskatoon. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moosomin.

**2017 Provincial 4-H Public Speaking
Competition Winner**

Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 2017 Provincial 4-H Public Speaking Competition was held on April 23rd in Canwood. I attended this event along with the member from Saskatchewan Rivers, and I thank her for her greetings she brought on behalf of the government.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of 4-H here in Saskatchewan. With age categories ranging from 6 to 21, 4-H is focused on the four areas of head, heart, health, and hands, and their motto is “Learn to Do by Doing.” Focusing on critical thinking, confidence, and independence, 4-H provides a unique and inclusive space for the youth of Saskatchewan to develop leadership skills and friendships that will last a lifetime.

I’d like to highlight a very special speaker from this competition, Mr. Speaker, my daughter, Emma. Mr. Speaker, Emma is part of the Elcapo Lighthorse 4-H Club, and this year there were 2,962 young public speakers competing for the provincial 4-H title. As her father and her biggest fan, I’m proud to report that my daughter Emma took home the gold this year for her speech on anti-smoking. Mr. Speaker, when she’s not working on her speeches, she is busy helping us raise animals on our family farm and keeping up with her love of writing and photography.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members in joining me to thank 4-H for their service to the youth of Saskatchewan for the past 100 years and to congratulate Emma for her provincial title.

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

Day of Mourning

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, every year since 1985, the members of this Assembly have taken the time to mark tomorrow, April 28th, as the international Day of Mourning for workers injured or killed on the job. It’s an important time to remember the workers who’ve lost their lives, but also a time for us as legislators to ensure that we’re doing everything we can to make Saskatchewan a place where there are no work-related deaths or injuries.

A private member’s bill in the House of Commons made April 28th the official Day of Mourning all across Canada in 1991. We’re quickly approaching the 30th year when our whole nation stands with workers around the world to remember those who are killed or injured at work.

We know that here in Saskatchewan there’s still a lot of work that needs to be done to make sure all our working men and women make it home safe at the end of each shift. Too many workers are hurt on the job each year, Mr. Speaker, and the numbers are even more alarming for young workers and for new workers. Since we marked the Day of Mourning last year,

another 31 workers have lost their lives.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in recognizing this year international Day of Mourning and to keep working and making progress to bring an end to work-related injuries and deaths here in Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Moose Jaw Business Excellence Awards

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday I, along with the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow, attended the Moose Jaw Business Excellence Awards hosted by the Moose Jaw & District Chamber of Commerce. It was a special night to recognize the dedicated work of businesses, their involvement in the community, and their contribution to the city of Moose Jaw and to the province.

Businesses were nominated in 12 different categories, and the winners were selected by a panel of judges based on their business, work ethic, and community involvement.

Congratulations to the award winners including Conexus Credit Union for community involvement, Boston Pizza on Main and Thatcher for customer service. The Young Entrepreneur Award went to Ultimate Auto Detailing and Accessories; Business Innovation to Emerald Custom Creations; Marketing to the Moose Jaw Warriors; the Heritage Award, the Tunnels of Moose Jaw; the New Business Venture, Peanut Hill Campground; Job Creation to Tim Hortons; Pillar of the Community was Chow McLeod legal professionals; the Impact Award to Riverside Mission. The Business Leader of the Year was presented to Scott Evans of Moose Jaw Ford Sales. I’m proud to announce that the Business of the Year Award was to Boston Pizza, Main and Thatcher. Mr. Speaker, a tremendous note of gratitude to the award winners and the nominations for their outstanding contributions to the city of Moose Jaw.

I ask all members to join in congratulating the winners and to the Moose Jaw Chamber of Commerce for hosting this successful event. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Regina Ukrainian Co-op’s 80th Anniversary

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, it has been a fixture on Winnipeg Street since the 1930s, and this year the Regina Ukrainian Co-op is celebrating its 80th anniversary.

In 1937 the Ukrainian Co-op was founded by members of Regina’s Ukrainian community who united together to fill the needs of their flourishing community by opening a member-owned and -run store. Once a small store in a house, the Ukrainian Co-op has grown thanks to the support of members who bought the property and several expansions.

Now 80 years on, the Co-op is a staple in the community and in my constituency, complete with a full deli and butcher shop, grocery complement, and Ukrainian boutique featuring both

Saskatchewan-made and imported goods from Eastern Europe.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has and continues to have a robust co-operative sector. Co-operatives form an integral part of Saskatchewan's economy. Often co-ops are started to knit cultural communities together, as in the case of the Ukrainian Co-op. Neighbours come together to create a business they own and run together, sharing in the responsibility of running the organization and sharing in the profits made. Moreover co-operatives are local. They hire local, buy local, and support local. Most Saskatchewanians support co-operatives, both consumer co-ops and credit unions alike because co-operative values are Saskatchewan values.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to join me in congratulating the Regina Ukrainian Co-op on their landmark 80th anniversary. May it continue to serve its members and community for decades to come. Thank you.

[10:30]

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

Merit Awards of Excellence

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Friday night I, along with the Minister of Highways and the Deputy Premier, attended the Merit 2017 Awards of Excellence held by the Merit construction Association of Saskatchewan. Here in our province, the construction industry is the second-largest private sector employer including more than 7,000 businesses with over 50,000 employees.

Mr. Speaker, the Merit Employer of the Year with fewer than 25 employees went to Miller Contracting based out of Prince Albert. The company has been in business since 1972, attributing their success to the relationship they build with their customers based on trust, reliability, communication, and outstanding quality.

The Merit Employer of the Year with more than 25 employees was Quorex Construction services. Quorex is based out of Regina and Saskatoon, operating on the philosophy that teamwork builds quality projects that are both on time and on budget. This company constructs projects province wide from schools to retail outlets as well as multi-family housing. Mr. Speaker, giving back to the community that supports their work ethic is very important to Quorex as they support projects such as Habitat for Humanity and Ronald McDonald House.

Other winners from the night included Aaron Robin, based in Regina, for field employee of the year, from Coram Construction; Maureen Kugler, in Prince Albert, for office employee of the year, from Asiil; and Kent Kollar from Allan Construction based out of Saskatoon, for leadership and mentoring award.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating the winners of this year's Merit open shop 2017 Awards of Excellence. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Provincial Secretary.

University of Saskatchewan and Northlands College

Hon. Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to share an exciting development that will improve post-secondary education in northern Saskatchewan. Yesterday the University of Saskatchewan and Northlands College completed a memorandum of understanding which seeks to offer a pre-engineering and science program in the North. The MOU [memorandum of understanding] will foster institutional collaboration with a focus on supporting under-represented student groups in learning more about science, math, technology, and engineering, while orientating them towards professional careers.

This program will also aim to increase access to post-secondary education in the North, as the signing of this MOU is just the beginning of creating more opportunity for students. In turn it will provide access to student support services for learners enrolled in the program regardless of campus and geographic site. This new partnership paves the way to delivering high-quality and industry-relevant academic programming and programs such as math and sciences.

I commend the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] and Northlands College on signing this MOU and for working to enhance educational and professional opportunities for all northern residents. I ask all members to join me in congratulating these institutions on their new partnership and for continuing to do right by our students.

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

Key Economic Indicators

Mr. Makowsky: — Thanks a lot, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to making Saskatchewan a great place to live, work, and invest. The members opposite like to criticize our policies, and they stubbornly refuse to acknowledge that what we're doing is working. I'm pleased to report this week alone there's been key economic indicators released that are clear evidence that Saskatchewan is moving in the right direction.

Yesterday the retail sales numbers for February were released, and they're on the rise in our province. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they show the highest percentage increase in all of Canada. There was a point six per cent increase whereas nationally there was a point six per cent decrease that month.

Year over year we've seen a 4.8 per cent increase in those sales numbers. Mr. Speaker, our economy continues to show strength and resilience. Recent growth in retail sales, wholesale trade, and manufacturing are demonstrating that fact. Policies of our government are making it possible for Saskatchewan to grow, which is a clear contrast to the NDP [New Democratic Party] ideas, Mr. Speaker. They even have a likely leadership candidate that wants to cripple our economy with a job-killing carbon tax.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

Mr. Makowsky: — Yes. Mr. Speaker, on this side of the

House, we're meeting the challenge. The recent numbers I mentioned earlier show it. Our policies are keeping our economy growing and our province strong. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Details of Land Transactions

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I want to give the Premier a chance to clarify what he said yesterday. When referencing a cabinet document from the former government, he said, "The whole second page is about Canadian Pacific Railway, Regina intermodal facility, currently located in the downtown area of the city." Of course it was, Mr. Speaker.

The previous government wanted to work with the city and CP [Canadian Pacific] Rail to move the rail yard. But then the Premier tried to say that somehow this previous government was also responsible for the Sask Party's scheme to give 300 acres of land to CP Rail for free, a giveaway that they implemented a full two years after the change in government.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit that he knows that what he is claiming is not what the memo says? And will he admit that suggesting the Sask Party was not responsible for something that happened a full two years after coming to office is not only wrong but absurd?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Oh, Mr. Speaker, I was hoping the Leader of the Opposition would lead with this line of questioning. It's part of the narrative he's trying to build that somehow the arrangement to move CP, to help CPR [Canadian Pacific Railway] relocate outside of Regina, was some sort of a match between the government and CP, some sort of an arrangement. Well, Mr. Speaker, that arrangement began and monies were set aside under the NDP. Mr. Speaker, if he could just turn to his left and look at the current Deputy Leader, the then minister of Highways, and he would find cupid, actually, for this match that was made all those years ago, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will quote from a briefing note that contains quotes from a cabinet document. In 2006, December of '06, when members opposite were the Government of Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure submitted a project proposal to the federal government under the Asia-Pacific Gateway and Corridor Initiative, and it was all about the Regina region intermodal or RRIM project.

Mr. Speaker, that same document goes on later to say for the ministry, authorizing, Mr. Speaker, for the ministry to finalize negotiations and formal agreements with the Government of Canada, CPR [Canadian Pacific Railway], right here on the dock, and the city of Regina, regarding their respective contributions, regarding their respective contributions — in other words, money from the then NDP government — requiring an estimated contribution from the provincial government of \$33 million.

Subsequent to that, in July of 2007 that member as the minister

of Highways, what happened? In April, the province approved \$33 million invested in the project in part, to do what? To help CPR locate to the hub, Mr. Speaker.

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

Crown Corporations and Intent of Bill 40

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it's just like, you know, he makes the claim and he sort of says it in a believable way, but what he's quoting from doesn't support at all what he's claiming, Mr. Speaker. Here is the government, a full two years after . . . or they were the government for two years when this giveaway occurred, Mr. Speaker. And this is a Premier, file after file, that isn't straight with Saskatchewan people.

When it comes to the privatization bill, Mr. Speaker, we had the Justice minister spending the last few days telling us, swearing to us, that this was not a bill that would change anything. It doesn't even change a definition, he said. Shaking his head, he told us it just adds a definition. And, Mr. Speaker, following the Premier's lines, minister after minister responsible for Crown after Crown, has refused to give a straight answer about what the plans are for our Crowns. They tell us there is no plan to sell stakes in our Crowns, and they, in defying common sense, they deny that the STC sell-off is even a sell-off.

So a question for the Premier: if as they claim, this bill really changes nothing, what's the rush to give it Royal Assent today? Why can't he wait even just a few weeks?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we've already had several occasions of Royal Assent after bills have passed through the stages of the House, so this is basically routine, Mr. Speaker, in the legislature.

I do want to share with my hon. friend yet more information about what his seatmate, the then Highways minister, did to orchestrate, help support CPR's . . . to help provide money to CPR to have them relocate to the hub.

Mr. Speaker, the documents also show, quote, I'm quoting: "The ministry of Highways and Infrastructure was in discussions with CPR towards finalizing [finalizing] the financial commitment from them towards the RRIM project." Finalization of a financial commitment from them required an approval from cabinet — their cabinet, that minister, the Deputy Leader, cupid — for the maximum contribution for this match, the maximum contribution that the province would make toward the project.

And then, Mr. Speaker, in a subsequent briefing note, we find out that in April, that approval was made by them, the NDP government, for \$33 million, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the question was about the Crowns. The Premier went off with a bunch of nonsense again here on a scandal, Mr. Speaker, a giveaway of millions. Of course he has an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly]

still sitting in this Assembly who's embroiled in a scandal and a government that's embroiled in a scandal with millions of dollars that were wasted by this government.

But it's been clear from the get-go what their intentions were with this bill. They of course use the word "partnership," but what that means here is sell-offs. It means one-time quick bucks for a government that couldn't manage.

Last night the Minister Responsible for SaskTel admitted as much. He even talked of a meeting he had with a telecommunication company. He said it was a chance run-in but, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't, you know, while he was out around town. It was in this building, the legislature of Saskatchewan. The Opposition House Leader asked who it was that he bumped into, but he wouldn't tell us. He wouldn't even say if any of the names rang a bell, Mr. Speaker. And you know, these aren't just any old Tom, Dick, or Harry, or Roger. The minister admitted that "... the government would entertain partnership ideas." In other words, sell-offs.

That would have been difficult before, but not so much now with this piece of legislation, the privatization bill that's been pushed by the Sask Party. Will the Premier finally come clean about what offers or interests they've received for STC, SaskTel, and our other Crowns? And will he admit that he wasn't straight with Saskatchewan people in the election?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, once again the member's preamble is incorrect, I would say. And, Mr. Speaker, members opposite are having a hard time differentiating between a sell-off — what they call a sell-off or what might be a partnership — and a wind-down, Mr. Speaker. And the differences are pretty clear.

The differences, if they look carefully, they'd find it in their own history because Premier Tommy Douglas, he had his government involved in a lot of business ventures. Why, they started a shoe factory in Regina. They had a wool mill to make blankets in Moose Jaw. They had fish plants in the North and a brick plant in Estevan. And then in 1948 they did start an intercity transit system.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, they didn't sell these operations. They didn't sell the fish plant or the shoe box or the shoe factory. They wound them down, Mr. Speaker, because they weren't making any money. They weren't in the interest, they weren't in the interest of the province's, I guess, fiscal outlook at the time.

So I would also just want to answer the question directly to the member with respect to SaskTel. There are no offers, Mr. Speaker. There are no offers currently before the government or the minister. Has there been interest expressed? Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been pretty clear from post the election when the MTS [Manitoba Telephone System] takeover happened, originally that we would consider that we would take an offer to the people, Mr. Speaker, in a referendum. We've subsequently changed that position; SaskTel's not for sale. But you can imagine that when you say that, there's going to be interest. Companies are going to come forward and say, well you know,

what's possible here.

Mr. Speaker the same has been true with respect to Bill 40. Of course there has been that interest. You know what? That interest was expressed when members opposite were in government. There would be companies, there would be other telcos that wanted to know what the government's intention was. There was an expression of interest.

In fact, Don Ching, who was president of SaskTel, at the direction of former Premier Romanow, had SaskTel evaluated. They wanted to find out what it was worth in case they sold it. Mr. Speaker, there was interest expressed then. Of course there's going to be discussions now. Nothing will move forward outside the interests of the province and outside Bill 40, Mr. Speaker.

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

Role of School Boards and Intent of Bill 63

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what's worse: how little reason the Sask Party are giving the people of Saskatchewan to have faith in them, or how little they seem to care. According to this month's Insignix poll, 91 per cent of Saskatchewan people and 71 per cent of Sask Party supporters are opposed to the minister's cuts to education — 91 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

[10:45]

When librarians and people across this province spoke up and protested against their short-sighted slashing of libraries, when they challenged the minister, Mr. Speaker, they challenged him, they won. And he was forced to admit that he was wrong once before. So why won't he just listen to the people of Saskatchewan, do the right thing on his own and scrap Bill 63?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the exact reason we have Bill 63 is to make sure that we keep resources in the classroom, not in the boardroom, not in the courtroom. We've now had a court ruling that's come from the Court of Queen's Bench which leaves our province in a very difficult situation. We will literally see thousands of students potentially moving from one school division to another.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the question of the members opposite where they stand on that ruling, what their position of it is. The NDP have yet to take a position on that, Mr. Speaker. The member for Regina Lakeview — former Regina Public trustee, education critic, possible leadership candidate — participates in RealRenewal which advocates a single school system. Now, Mr. Speaker, we also have the member for Regina Douglas Park, a former Regina . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we have the member from

Regina Douglas Park, a former Regina Catholic trustee. Where does she stand? She's the Justice critic. She would have an opinion on the legal matter. She should also have an opinion of where she stood as a Catholic trustee.

The interim Leader of the Opposition: former trustee, former Education critic. The member for Saskatoon Centre: former teacher, former cabinet. Where do these people stand on this?

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the minister is aware of how poorly those lines are playing with people in the sector. That minister's condescending and arrogant tone certainly doesn't match up with the hundreds of letters I've received in my office from parents and teachers who are worried about the cuts this government is making to their kids' classrooms.

Why does the minister not understand the concerns that parents have about the minister's plan to take away local voices in education? He arrogantly proclaims that he knows better than Saskatchewan people, and he feels entitled to take the decision-making powers away from locally elected trustees and give full power to himself.

Mr. Speaker, thousands of people spoke out in favour of locally elected trustees, but the minister is going against their will, against their wishes, and plowing ahead with Bill 63 and his plan to take control of school divisions. Why won't he scrap Bill 63?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Bill 63 would have enabled a government to prevent the public board from suing the separate board when the separate board wanted to operate a school in Theodore to the benefit of parents in that community, to benefit of students in that community. And that lawsuit, which spent millions of taxpayers' dollars instead of going to the classroom, has now resulted in a court ruling, and that court ruling would threaten, in terms of schooling, on an everyday basis, 5 to 10,000 students.

The member should want to listen to this: 5 to 10,000 students would be affected by this ruling if it's implemented where non-Catholic students are kicked out of Catholic schools. What also hangs in the balance, Mr. Speaker, potentially, are other religious schools like the Huda School, like Regina Christian School. All of this is now at risk based on this ruling. Members opposite have said they support a single-school system, that they effectively support the spirit of the ruling.

I'm asking the Leader of the Opposition to stand up and say what his position is. Does he support a public and a separate system? Does he support the Government of Saskatchewan protecting those families, ensuring the interests of those students, or not, Mr. Speaker?

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, here we have captain grandstand get onto his feet, Mr. Speaker, with an issue that's . . . [inaudible] . . . to an entire province. And what we have is a Premier who sat on his hands when the sector and our school boards needed leadership. They wanted the government's involvement to mediate and to find a solution. Instead this government, this government sat on its hands. It disrespected the sector. It didn't listen to our school boards, and it left this decision come to be instead of providing some leadership, Mr. Speaker.

How did this Premier, seeing that this was coming, dealing with, in his way, big things like changing the school year, how did he not provide the leadership that the sector needed to mediate this situation?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, now this is getting really interesting. First of all, the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Education expressed, expressed on several occasions, his displeasure with one school board suing the other school board, Mr. Speaker. That leadership, that communication was made.

But it's interesting what the Leader of the Opposition, the interim Leader of the NDP is now saying. He said, you in government should've done something. You should've maybe stopped this lawsuit beyond, beyond perhaps leadership. Well you know what, Mr. Speaker? How might we do that in the future? Bill 63, Mr. Speaker.

So if that's his position, if his position is that the Government of Saskatchewan ought to be able to intervene in a legal way beyond, beyond the moral suasion, beyond the encouragement of the Minister of Education, then he should stand in his place and say, here's our position on the Theodore ruling because we still don't know that, and secondly, here's my support for Bill 63.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, this is a Premier and a Sask Party that has disrespected education every step of the way. They've torn apart the education sector. They've failed to listen to the partners, school boards, or teachers, all while cutting, after cutting, after cutting. This court case is no surprise. This government had a chance to act and to show some leadership, to lean into this, and to mediate a solution, Mr. Speaker. This Premier sat on his hands while disrespecting the voice of the education sector, and we're in this mess . . .

The Speaker: — I'm having increased difficulties hearing the question. I would ask all members to at least be respectful in listening to the question and listening to the response. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, we're clearly in this mess in education in part because of this Premier and the Sask Party's failure to lead, the failure to respect the education sector. How on earth can the Premier of Saskatchewan think that a full takeover of elected school boards is the answer to this very significant challenge?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it's good to hear the interim leader of the NDP admit that this is a significant challenge. We still don't know what his position is though.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member just referenced mediation. Again, he should probably be aware of the file before he gets into the debate because mediation was offered to both school boards in this regard. Both of them were offered mediation, and the public school board turned mediation down. They would rather spend tax . . . Well he wasn't even listening; I'll repeat it for him.

Mediation was offered. The public board turned it down, Mr. Speaker. Every point of contact — and there were many between the government and the public school board — resulted in their intransigence and their determination to sue the separate board, which has got us to where we are today.

Bill 63, when used . . . And, Mr. Speaker, the boards will be independent. They will operate schooling and education in the province of Saskatchewan. But on occasions like this, where we need to be able to do more than encourage or offer mediation that's turned down, it means the Government of Saskatchewan, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, the students of Saskatchewan, can step in and stop this sort of thing.

And again, you know, all the bluster's interesting, even the incorrect facts he's raised in the House just now, but I don't know his position. He's got an Education critic who supports a single education system. He has been hiding under a pile of coats since this ruling was made. Mr. Speaker, now is his chance to stand up in favour of students in this province, in favour of separate and public education. Will he do that? Will he finally stand up and tell Saskatchewan people what his position is?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition . . . or, sorry. I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Provision of Teacher Education Programming in the North

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps if the Premier and the Minister of Education would have done their job, the people wouldn't be in court today, Mr. Speaker.

This weekend, the member from Cumberland will join with people from across the North in celebrating what should be an exclusively and completely happy occasion. It's another NORTEP [northern teacher education program] graduation day. For four decades, this has been a day that symbolized hope for the future, empowerment for the young people, and pride in our communities. But this weekend, Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Sask Party, there will be a cloud over this celebration, as this will be the last NORTEP graduation.

So to the minister, even though she has consistently refused to stand up for the students, will she, at the very least, go to the graduation this weekend, and will she look those students, graduates and their families in the eye as they celebrate the success of this program one last time? Would she do that?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Mr. Speaker, I was very honoured to be invited to that graduation ceremony this weekend, and I just did a video that would be sent to the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Because my son is in a speaking competition this weekend, Mr. Speaker, and I had a prior obligation. And so I would have been honoured to attend, honoured to be invited, and honoured to judge the video clips for a video contest at Northlands, which is what I'm responding to in the video, Mr. Speaker.

And I can tell you these are proud, dedicated students who in many cases have overcome great adversity to get where they are, Mr. Speaker. And we are proud of them, which is what I express in the video, proud of all our northern students. And with young people such as these, the prospects of the North are in sure hands, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, we're seeing lots of evidence of lack of respect for local voices in education today in this House and from this government. I would like to see this minister go. If she can't go, can she find someone else from this government? There's lots of you over there. Who's going to go to that graduation, Mr. Speaker?

And if you can't do that, can you at least stand in this Assembly and admit that the Sask Party failed those students by closing down NORTEP, and they failed to ensure that teacher training in the North will remain affordable? With students now facing an increase in costs, nearly \$7,000 more than they were paying before, will the minister admit these failures? And if she can't do that, will she at least do the bare minimum and confirm for us today in this Assembly that those students already enrolled in NORTEP will receive the full support that they were promised on admission throughout the time in the program?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we would simply ask that some of that negative energy be channelled to focusing on the best interests of northern students and not on pitting one institution against another, with students caught in the middle, Mr. Speaker.

Let's be very clear: Northlands has said it will automatically accept NORTEP students. Seventeen Bachelor of Education students are currently enrolled for this fall, and we are working with Northlands and NORTEP to come up with a fair, workable solution on supports for NORTEP students, which we believe is possible, Mr. Speaker.

Currently NORTEP is the only program in the province that offers free tuition, books, and living expenses to non-treaty students. That poses some issues of equity for other students, including at Northlands, who pay tuition and apply for student supports, Mr. Speaker. Integrating northern university programming into our regional college system provides students with a much needed way forward and a great path to the future,

Mr. Speaker.

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

Reporting of Political Donations

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, it's hard for people to trust the Sask Party these days. Just think about what we've been dealing with: their desperate bill to let them sell off our Crowns, their massive giveaways to big corporations like CP, their massive tax cuts for companies and the wealthy while the rest of us are being asked to pay a billion dollars or more in taxes.

Mr. Speaker, they've completely forgotten who they're working for. But, Mr. Speaker, there's hope. They could clear all of this up. They have an opportunity to rise to the occasion and make all these questions go away. Will the Sask Party finally come to their senses and join us to get big money out of politics?

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a robust system in this province with respect to the public reporting of donations to political parties, Mr. Speaker, and we have a very robust lobbying legislation. So any member of the public, Mr. Speaker, any member of the public can look at that lobbying registry and find out who is talking to who in government, Mr. Speaker.

I find it hypocritical though, Mr. Speaker, that that member would stand up and talk about big money in politics at the same time when they're looking for sponsors for their leader's dinner, Mr. Speaker. If they had the courage of their convictions, Mr. Speaker, if they had the courage of their convictions, they would say that, Mr. Speaker. But they don't. They're happy enough to continue on looking for donations, looking for donations from unions, Mr. Speaker, to sponsor any one of a number of things, Mr. Speaker.

So as far as we're concerned, Mr. Speaker, the system that we have in place now is working very, very well, Mr. Speaker, and it will continue to work well.

[11:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you. I've got a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — We'll listen to the Government House Leader's point of order, please.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The interim Leader of the Opposition during question period used the phrase "captain grandstand," which I'm pretty sure is unparliamentary. And I'd ask him to withdraw and apologize and address the Premier by his proper title.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I would withdraw that.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — There's a lot of additional noise in the Chamber today. I would ask that the Leader of the Opposition please rise to his feet and withdraw and apologize for the remark.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Yes, I have no problem apologizing, withdrawing and apologizing for those words.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 48, *The Education Property Tax Act* without amendment.

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill be now read the third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in the Committee of the Whole on Bills on Bill No. 48 and that the bill be now read a third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 48 — *The Education Property Tax Act*

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I move that this bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 48 be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 49, *The Education Property Tax Consequential Amendment Act, 2017*, a bilingual bill without amendment.

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that this bill be now read the third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in the Committee of the Whole on Bills on Bill No. 49 and that the bill be now read a third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 49 — *The Education Property Tax Consequential Amendment Act, 2017/Loi de 2017 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Education Property Tax Act*

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I move that the bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 49 be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Third reading of

this bill.

The Speaker: — I've been informed that Her Honour is here for Royal Assent.

ROYAL ASSENT

[At 11:06 Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took her seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following bills.]

Her Honour: — Pray be seated.

The Speaker: — May it please Your Honour that this Legislative Assembly in its present session has passed several bills which in the name of the Assembly I present to Your Honour and to the bills I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Clerk: — Your Honour, the bills are as follows:

- Bill No. 40 - *The Interpretation Amendment Act, 2016/Loi modificative de 2016 sur l'interprétation*
- Bill No. 48 - *The Education Property Tax Act*
- Bill No. 49 - *The Education Property Tax Consequential Amendment Act, 2017/Loi de 2017 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Education Property Tax Act*

Her Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I assent to these bills.

[Her Honour retired from the Chamber at 11:08.]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 335 through 359.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled responses to questions 335 to 359.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Budget Cuts

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to stand and speak in this debate with this motion that's before us:

That this Assembly condemns the government for their deep and unexpected cuts to cities and towns, for axing grants-in-lieu, forcing municipalities to raise taxes and cut services, and for making Saskatchewan families pay for the Saskatchewan Party's decade-long run of mismanagement, scandal, and waste.

A lot in that motion talks about how municipalities are feeling with regards to this decision with the grants-in-lieu, Mr. Speaker. Why does this government want to break all these decade-old contracts with urban municipalities, Mr. Speaker?

I know you're familiar that my background is mental health, and I relate to this situation as a state of grief. Municipalities were not aware that this could even be possibly something that this government would be going forward with because, like I said before, Mr. Speaker, these were contracts that are decades old. They were signed years and years ago, and nobody ever thought that this government would break their contracts with municipalities without even any level of consultation. And, Mr. Speaker, when the minister says that she did consult because she said everything was on the table, that's not proper consultation because the municipalities did not once believe that they would break decades-old contracts that were signed.

And the minister's responsible for managing a relationship with urban leaders, and that relationship requires that level of consultation when it's time to make these tough decisions. And I think everybody in this province are aware of the financial situation we're in, and I think municipalities were ready to partner up with the province and make some tough decisions where they needed to be made. But to eliminate contracts that were signed with the leaders and with the provincial leaders, that affects a lot of these municipalities in this province, and it's going to be devastating for them. And they've had to make some really hard decisions on what they're going to do with regards to this loss.

And I don't believe it's very fair, and it didn't include a lot of the other municipalities that are in the province when we were needing to make these tough decisions, you know, Mr. Speaker. So like in 10 years, these municipalities are going to lose \$400 million. That's a lot of money, you know, and we need to talk to those leaders and consult with them and make a plan.

So how can anyone trust any deals that they currently have with the government when we see that they can, with the stroke of a pen, break these contracts that they have agreed? And like I said, Mr. Speaker, municipalities are our partners. They can and are willing to help, and the minister just needs to consult with them and come up with a plan that's more suitable and won't be so damaging to these communities.

I want to provide a little bit of history with regards to these payments-in-lieu. And so I'm going to read some information that was provided to all of the members here, I believe, from SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association]. It was a package that we got; I believe it was this week. And in here it says:

In the early 20th century, many municipalities started producing and distributing electrical power which also gave them a new revenue source. While electrification often began in the business district, municipal power expanded to residential areas and out to nearby farms. SaskPower was created in the 1940s to expand electrification to all areas of Saskatchewan, and they bought out these existing municipal power utilities to create a provincial grid. These purchased agreements covered capital investments and include a guarantee that

SaskPower and any subsidiaries would pay royalties in perpetuity on future sales of power.

So this was for future sales; these were agreements. Basically because municipalities were giving up their own power company, the new company promised to pay them a little bit of the product they were going to sell. And these royalties were to be paid forever. Those agreements were forever.

Not all municipalities had their own power utility to sell, so that's why only some received these payments. It's not unfair that they received them. It's unfair that the provincial government used the budget to take these revenues away from SUMA members to cover the provincial deficit.

[11:15]

So, Mr. Speaker, like I said, these are going to be covering a lot of communities, and I wanted to read about some of the members here that are going to be impacted with these changes to our hometowns — every one of our hometowns. And I think it's important for every one of the members here to pay attention to this.

So the member from The Battlefords: it's North Battleford and Battleford that are being impacted. The member from Weyburn-Big Muddy: Weyburn and Yellow Grass. The member from Melfort: it's Melfort, Watson, LeRoy, Star City. The member from Melville-Saltcoats, he has quite a few communities that are impacted: it's Melville, Esterhazy, Langenburg, Churchbridge, Saltcoats, and Bredenbury. And then the member from Kindersley: it's Kindersley, Eston, Kerrobert, Macklin, Luseland, Eatonia, and Scott. And then the member from Martensville-Warman: it's Warman and Martensville both being affected. And the member from Carrot River Valley: Nipawin is being impacted, Tisdale, Carrot River, and Arborfield. And the member for Rosetown-Elrose: it's Rosetown, Delisle, Elrose, Kyle, Zealandia. And then the member from Wood River: it's Assiniboia, Gravelbourg, Lafleche, and moose bank.

An Hon. Member: — Mossbank.

Ms. Rancourt: — Mossbank. The member from Moosomin — I'm glad some people are listening here — is Moosomin, Grenfell, Kipling, Whitewood, Wolseley, Rocanville, Broadview, and Wapella. The member for carrot knife Turtleford: it's Unity and Wilkie. And then the member for Cypress Hills: I know it's Maple Creek, Shaunavon, Leader, Gull Lake, Eastend, Cabri, and Burstall. The member for Canora-Pelly: Canora, Kamsack, Preeceville, Sturgis, Norquay. The member from Biggar-Sask Valley: it's Biggar, Langham, and Asquith.

The member from Indian Head-Milestone: Fort Qu'Appelle, Indian Head, Balgonie, Qu'Appelle, Milestone, and . . .

An Hon. Member: — Sinteluta.

Ms. Rancourt: — Sinteluta, thank you. I see that he's listening, and I'm happy to see that some of these members are listening today.

The member from Kelvington-Wadena: Weyburn . . . oh Wynyard, Wadena, Kelvington, Foam Lake, and Rose Valley. And the member from Lumsden-Morse: Lumsden, Herbert, and Morse. And the member from Cannington: Carlyle, Oxbow, Carnduff, Redvers, Stoughton, Arcola, Lampman, and . . .

An Hon. Member: — Alameda.

Ms. Rancourt: — Alameda, Alameda. So I see the member from Cannington is paying attention as well, and I'm glad. And I hope they're going to go talk to their municipal leaders.

The member from Batoche: it's Wakaw, Birch Hills, Cudworth, Kinistino, and Duck Lake. And the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood: it's Strasbourg, Balcarres, Cupar, and Lemberg. And the member from Estevan: it's Midale, Bienfait, and Estevan.

And there's 12 members from Regina that are impacted. There's 14 members from Saskatoon, two members from Moose Jaw, the two members from Prince Albert, and Yorkton's impacted, the member from Swift Current, the member from Lloydminster, the member from Meadow Lake. And the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook is also impacted because Rosthern is one of the communities.

But also the Minister for Government Relations with regards to her communities. It's Humboldt, Watrous, Lanigan, Bruno, Allan, and Colonsay. So there's a lot of hometowns here, Mr. Speaker, that are impacted, and the majority, well almost all of the members here, are impacted.

And so I'm hoping everybody goes and talks to their municipal leaders. I've talked to quite a few of them. I haven't talked to all of them. But I know with talking to the ones that I have, they say that they've been going through all of the emotions. They were really angry. They were surprised. They were shocked. They were angry. Then now they just are kind of in disbelief that this is happening.

And they're wondering, because these are contracts, Mr. Speaker, what would be the compensation for these municipalities for ending these contracts? If you have a deal with someone and you made a lifelong deal, there should be some level of compensation for cancelling that deal before the end of the deal. And will this change the status of the agreements with the sale of these utilities? So I think those are really important questions that should be pondered before the minister decides to put through the amendments of this bill and the decision with the grants-in-lieu.

And so I also think it's really important, Mr. Speaker, that we talk about what the consequences of downloading this provincial deficit onto these municipalities is, because that's essentially what it is, Mr. Speaker. When we asked, why is this being done, they said, well we want to put that money into the general revenue so that we could help pay off our deficit.

Well now this is putting these expenses onto the people who live in these municipalities, and we've heard of a lot of communities that have had to increase taxes. And we know because, well a lot of municipalities, they've made long-term budgets because they were thinking that this was going to be a

consistent agreement with the province, that they increased taxes this year, but they're probably going to have to increase taxes in the next years as well, you know.

And so these are going to be families that are going to be paying for this. I know myself and the other member from Prince Albert, our taxes will be going up probably next year because of this. And I know all the members in Regina, their taxes have had to go up, you know, and they're going to be paying more. And so that's not just us, but it's our families. It's our neighbours. It's everybody in our communities.

They've also had to make decisions on cutting programs. And I was just reading before I came in this morning about how the Lighthouse in North Battleford . . . The North Battleford city council had to make a really tough decision and eliminate \$25,000 that they give to the Lighthouse. And \$25,000 for a community-based organization is a lot of money, Mr. Speaker, and that goes a long way. And that's going to be a huge loss for the Lighthouse, but they've had to make those tough decisions. And so some communities cut the program. Some of them had to, like, eliminate some of the funding that they provide for it, which in essence will eliminate some of the services provided.

And I know in Prince Albert our police services is one of the agencies that have had to make some tough decisions and help the city manage with this loss of funding. And so we have a community that has a lot of issues with regards to crime, and increasing issues with regards to crime, and so to see that our police budget is going to be reduced is really troubling and worrisome for a lot of the residents in the community.

And we know that there's going to be an increase in fees. We have heard of increase in parking fees. We've heard of increase in fees to going to our recreational facilities. There's going to be a lot of increases. Not only did our PST [provincial sales tax] increase by 1 per cent and the PST exemptions be placed on a lot of different areas, now our municipal taxes are going up. We're going to be having to pay more to do things with our family, and it's going to impact just everyone here, you know? So we need to really consider that.

And some of the cities were talking about possibly putting in their line when people receive their taxes, saying that this is the provincial government's tax increase. Because it's important that residents realize and know that it's not the municipalities who have made that decision to increase the taxes. It's due to the fact that this government is not abiding to the agreement that they have with the municipalities.

But, Mr. Speaker, before I close here I have a lot more to add, but I'll hopefully have time to do that. I'd like to move this motion. And so the motion reads here:

That this Assembly condemns the government for their deep and unexpected cuts to cities and towns, for axing grants-in-lieu, forcing municipalities to raise taxes and cut services, and for making Saskatchewan families pay for the Sask Party's decade-long run of mismanagement, scandal, and waste.

I do so move this motion.

The Speaker: — The member from Prince Albert Northcote has put forth the following motion:

That this Assembly condones the government for their deep and unexpected cuts to cities and towns, for axing grants-in-lieu, forcing municipalities to raise taxes and cut services, and for making Saskatchewan families pay for the Saskatchewan Party's decade-long run of mismanagement, scandal, and waste.

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

Mr. Steele: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you and to the members of the Assembly and to all of those watching this debate, it is an honour to stand before you today.

We are facing hard times that require tough decisions to be made when it comes to the 2017-2018 budget. Saskatchewan is facing a \$1.2 billion shortfall in resource revenues; \$1.2 billion shortfall cannot be ignored. We needed to tighten up our belt and figure out ways to help Saskatchewan move forward through tough times.

Even with these tough decisions, our government has made the choices to ensure that it has as little effect on the people of Saskatchewan as possible. Mr. Speaker, one of those tough decisions was to change the grants-in-lieu program. This wasn't an easy decision, but we heard consistently that municipal leaders did not want us to change the revenue sharing.

When faced with the choice and the need to reduce spending, it was chosen to change the outdated, complicated grant-in-lieu program while maintaining revenue sharing. After the budget came out, we listened to the municipal leaders and worked with them to alleviate their concerns and to find ways to ensure that the municipalities who had grants-in-lieu are not getting more than 30 per cent deduction of their revenue sharing.

Mr. Speaker, it needs to be noted that a majority of the communities in Saskatchewan were not even receiving the SaskEnergy or SaskPower payments referred to in the grants-in-lieu taxation. That is based on a flat percentage of utility sales within the municipalities.

Urban municipalities have been asked to absorb approximately a 2.5 per cent decrease, about 33 million. We believe this is a fair thing to ask our partners.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP are quick to criticize but haven't yet offered any real solutions to the revenue shortfall caused by depressed commodity prices. So today, I would ask, what would the NDP have done? They would have cut funding which we have been . . . shutting municipalities down like they did when they were in power? Would they have closed schools? Would they shut hospitals? Would they fire front-line staff? Those questions are relevant because the NDP were in power when they closed schools and hospitals and refused to be a good partner to municipalities. Our record, however, since 2007, municipal revenue sharing has more than doubled, up to 130 million a year, and municipalities will still receive over 257 million in municipal revenue sharing.

Since 2007, Mr. Speaker, Cypress Hills municipalities have received provincial funding to assist with much-needed infrastructure, highways, health care facilities, just to name to a few. In 2008 my constituency received funding to fix and repair highways — Highway 32, 3.4 million; Highway 37, 7.7 million; and Highway 1, 22.1 million. In 2009, 33.9 million was invested on the highway within my constituency.

[11:30]

In 2010 Highway 1 going west had 10 million spent on much-needed repairs and was in addition to 39 million invested on other highways in my constituency that year. Mr. Speaker, I could go on and list how much was spent every year on highway upgrades within my constituency, proving how our government is consistent and reliable.

Several municipalities received infrastructure funding to assist in upgrades to their water treatment plants, sewage stations, parks and arenas through the years since we have become in government. Burstall received 472,000 for their water treatment upgrades. Fox Valley received 229,000 towards their water treatment upgrades. Swift Current, which is just beside my constituency, received 990,000 towards upgrades for their water treatment plant. Shaunavon Wickenheiser Centre received 983,000 on phase 3 and 250,000 on their multi-purpose facility. Maple Creek received funding for their Centennial Park upgrade, 201,000; sewage main replacement, 239,000.

Mr. Speaker, when the NDP were in power, they were closing hospitals which in turn was hurting the survival of communities no matter what size. Mr. Speaker, our government wants communities to survive and thrive and that is why we continue to invest in communities within our province.

In 2015 Maple Creek received 36.2 million to invest in their integrated health care facility. I'm happy to announce that Leader is moving forward with their construction of their integrated health care facility. Our government will be helping with the funding of 6.7 million allowing them to move forward with their construction plans. And those are just a few examples. If we look outside my constituency, there are numerous examples we have invested to build infrastructure within our province for new proposals.

Mr. Speaker, I was a municipal leader for many years, and I just thought that the member from Prince Albert Northcote acknowledges that I had some experience in that area. It was a privilege to serve as reeve and councillor for the RM [rural municipality] of Gull Lake for over 20 years where I served on a number of committees in my time on council. This gave me the opportunity to develop an understanding of policy initiatives and appreciate the purpose and challenges working with provincial and federal governments. We had the responsibility to ensure that the health and welfare of our people in rural Saskatchewan were taken care of. We were about the municipal services, establishing policies, and providing direction from our operation of the municipality, giving me a very strong understanding of the needs of our rural people first hand.

Our government also understands the people of Saskatchewan. They have shown over the years and continue to show, that the people of communities . . . communities matter to them . . .

continue to invest in the communities to ensure that they thrive for the people who live there.

I was very active in the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] for over 15 years. I had roles as a director, as vice-president before moving to provincial politics. I can say from the experience that the ... from my ... that was the experience that the NDP did not have a good working relationship with municipalities when they were in, refusing to invest in infrastructure, continuously cutting funding in municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, SARM has worked with our government and SUMA in an effective way to increase municipal co-operation and capacity. The government and SARM have built a good working relationship over the years that benefit the province as a whole. The contrast is clear. The NDP may talk tough, but they lack in the real solution and their record speaks for itself. Mr. Speaker, this conflicts with our record of investment and strong partnerships with Saskatchewan municipalities. That is why I cannot support the motion from the member opposite. Thank you.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it is always an honour for me to be able to rise in the 75-minute debate. I find it's an interesting, almost two polarized, different world views. It's always quite interesting to follow the discussion and see how people characterize their particular times in government.

You know, the speaker who was just up, the member from Cypress Hills, was talking about all what he perceives as accomplishments since 2007. But he forgot to mention that this is a party that came into government when revenues were unbelievably high. Oil was \$140 a barrel, Mr. Speaker. I mean when you talk about volatility in resource revenues, I mean this government was handed the best money this province has ever seen. And, Mr. Speaker, what did they do? They blew through it all. He forgot to mention that.

He also forgot to mention that they also, in addition to that, spent every penny of savings that was in the coffers at the time, burned through it all. And now what's the result of that, Mr. Speaker? They're sticking it to the municipal sector, Mr. Speaker. And despite his good relationships, we know that the municipal sector is not sitting back on this and taking it lightly. There's been so much concern raised by the municipal sector for the deep cuts that have been in this budget, cuts to cities, towns, and obviously to programs that are very important to rural municipalities.

We had people from every community rising up, lots of rural communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rising up against the unjust cuts to the libraries. That's one area where for \$4 million, this government has actually seen the errors of their ways and had enough sense to change it. But they haven't done that any further with the municipalities.

Now I must say, there was some clawback after the initial announcement. We've seen that time and time again with this

government. Oh, you know, people don't like it; I guess we'd better fix it. But they're very stubborn about which ones they fix and which ones they don't.

There's a few things I want to raise in my short 10 minutes here, Mr. Speaker. And one is the bill that they're imposing on the people of Saskatchewan and some of the clauses in this bill that are really unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. And particularly the specific clause that denies the right to appeal. This is a very heavy-handed tool that a government uses and shouldn't be used at all, or if it is used, it should be used very sparingly. But we see that in at least two bills in this session alone, Mr. Speaker. They've also inserted the same bill in the amendments to the water Act — and, Mr. Speaker, I think it's Bill 44 — and another clause where we see that people of Saskatchewan are being denied the right to appeal decisions of this government.

Now I found a paper that I want to cite from a little bit. This is from the Law Reform Commission of Saskatchewan and it's about ... The title of the paper is *Appeals from the Exercise of Statutory Powers of Decision*. This is a final report that came out in March of 2012. Now the Law Reform Commission has made a number of recommendations which actually this government is going in the exact opposite direction from. And basically, I'll just share with the Assembly here some of the thoughts that are put in this final report. So in the executive summary, they say this:

This paper is concerned with appeals to the courts from decisions directly affecting individuals that are made by officials under statutory authorization. Such appeals are usually provided for by statute. However, there is a lack of consistency in the form and scope of statutory appeal rights, and some statutes do not provide for appeals. This paper makes recommendations respecting the right to appeal, grounds of appeal and structure of appeals.

So there's six recommendations that came out of this report. Number one, "There should be a right of appeal from the exercise of all statutory powers of decision." Now, Mr. Speaker, that's exact opposite of what we see in this bill where this government is denying the right to appeal from these statutory powers of decision.

It goes on to say "Statutes that create a statutory power of decision and expressly prohibit appeal or judicial review should be amended to allow an appeal or review." This is a complete opposite treatment of what the Law Reform Commission of Saskatchewan has recommended just five years ago, Mr. Speaker, in 2012. This government is going the exact opposite way. And I think it's a scary thing in this day and age when we see a government refusing to follow recommendations from the Law Reform Commission that deal with people's rights, people's rights when their self-determination is being affected, Mr. Speaker.

The third one, "When a statute containing a statutory power of decision is in the process of being amended or reviewed, a right of appeal should be inserted if none is present."

And, Mr. Speaker, there were days when governments weren't required to be accountable to their people. It's called a monarchy or it's called a dictatorship, Mr. Speaker. But in a

democracy, governments need to be held accountable, and citizens and municipal bodies and whoever is affected by the decisions of the government need to be able to have recourse in the event that the government is overreaching its powers, Mr. Speaker. And that's what the courts are for. That's what they're for. So when we have a government that inserts clauses in bills like this and refuse to allow people their rights, which have been recommended by the people who study our laws, I think that's a definite sign of a mature government that's maybe gone a little bit overripe, Mr. Speaker.

Now in committee on April 5th, I raised the issue of this, the cuts to what they call payments-in-lieu of taxes or grants-in-lieu of taxes. We've understood subsequently that there are a number of different ways that payments or grants are raised by our public Crowns in order to provide funding to municipalities or funding to different agencies. But the one in particular that this government is now impinging upon, these are contracts that, I believe there are 13 of them that I know of, that are agreements in perpetuity.

And, Mr. Speaker, when the revenue sharing formula was being discussed and reviewed, these contracts were taken into account. That was part of the negotiations that were in play when the formula . . . And as you know, it's a complicated formula and it took a long time to accomplish. So these agreements were part of that, and yet this minister seems to think, oh well those are something that I just found on a line item and I'm going to cut them.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that really bothers me about this whole process is that these funds that were collected and provided to these communities, these municipalities, aren't just being left with our Crowns, Mr. Speaker. No. What's happening to them? They're being clawed back and they're being taken and put into the GRF [General Revenue Fund].

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have something in this province called Crown Investments Corporation, the CIC, and this is a complete run around on the CIC. So I have the minister, I asked him in committee the other day, I said . . . First of all he wasn't too sure what was happening to the money because I said, if I understand correctly . . . This is a quote from *Hansard*:

If I understand correctly, instead of the money flowing from the Crowns to the municipalities, are those Crowns now required to pay that amount to the provincial GRF?"

And then the minister gave me incorrect information. He said, "No . . . It's not necessarily a cash payment to the GRF; it just simply shows up in their operating earnings." And then he was corrected by his officials at that point, Mr. Speaker, and he says further on, "I've been corrected. It is money that they're going to transfer to the GRF."

Mr. Speaker, so when you see . . . Let's take a look at what the mandate of CIC is because clearly this government is going around that and not following the requirements of the law, Mr. Speaker. Crown Investments Corporation has statutory authority under *The Crown Corporations Act, 1993*. Here's what it says on their web page, Mr. Speaker:

CIC is the holding company for all subsidiary Crown

corporations and shall exercise its supervisory powers granted by this Act in the interests of all Saskatchewan residents.

And then it goes on to say:

CIC is the agency for making and administering, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, the investments authorized by this Act or any previous Crown Corporations Act.

So let's take a look, Mr. Speaker, at *The Crown Corporations Act, 1993*, and what is the role, objects, purposes, and powers of the CIC. We have section 5, CIC. And these are . . . Section 5(1) is exactly what I read from the web site, but if you go on and look at it, it says CIC is responsible for "the financial relationships between subsidiary Crown corporations and the Government of Saskatchewan." Section 5(2)d, CIC is responsible for "the financial relationships between subsidiary Crown corporations and the Government of Saskatchewan."

What this government is doing here completely does an end run on CIC, on *The Crown Corporations Act, 1993*. It's unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. It's unacceptable the way the cities are being treated, Mr. Speaker. And it's unacceptable that taxpayers are going to bear the brunt of this one way or another, but it's being off-loaded onto the cities.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I believe that members opposite are going to have to pay attention to what the law says and figure out how they can go around *The Crown Corporations Act* in this way. I certainly do support the motion, and I'm interested to hear what other members opposite have to say about it. And I look forward to the questions subsequently.

[11:45]

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

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to speak against the motion presented by the member from Prince Albert Northcote. In the budget presented in March 2017, this government was challenged with the task of trying to make up the difference in a \$1.2 billion resource revenue shortfall. Now we're well aware of the risks of putting too much pressure on one sector of the economy, so we tried to spread the risk, really, through the majority of segments that could absorb at least some of this shortfall.

Now that was a \$33 million, or a 2.5 per cent of the shortfall, request of our urban municipality partners. Not that this was taken lightly, as in times of economic difficulty, we realize that really every dollar paid or collected has a lot of places that it can be spent by any municipality.

Municipal revenue sharing accounts for the majority of funding that originates from the provincial government. Contrary to the sky is falling, you haven't done anything for us lately attitude expressed by the opposition, we need to remind them that the revenue sharing in this budget amounted to just under \$258 million in the 2017-18 year. Now this has increased by over 130 million or just about two times what was provided in

2007-2008.

Other important expenditures in this year's budget includes municipal infrastructure spending of 279 million, which includes transfers to municipalities including the new Canada building fund, Clean Water and Wastewater Fund, the federal Gas Tax Program, Public Transit Infrastructure Fund, transit assistance for people with disabilities program, and Communities in Transition funding.

Transportation infrastructure spending in this budget adds up to over \$860 million, including improvements in highways around Regina, Martensville, Warman, Estevan, Clavet, and municipal roads for the economy, urban connectors, and community airports.

It's interesting going through the archives of time and watching the actions and reactions of a provincial government going through similar economic situations and how they handled it. An article found in the *Leader-Post* dated February 6th, 2001 talks about the city of Regina requesting a minimum increase of \$3 million from the province if it was going to preserve existing services and programs without having to increase property taxes. The mayor of the day, Pat Fiocco, was quoted as saying this:

Kim Trew, the NDP MLA for Regina Coronation Park, was quoted saying he wished that really the government could wave a magic wand and provide all the money that everybody could use. Now while Regina's appeal for more funding will be taken into consideration, the government must be fiscally responsible. This is what Mr. Trew said.

Now also in that 2001 article, it was discussed by Mayor Fiocco that over the previous 10 years, the province had slashed the city's funding by over 70 per cent. He proclaimed the NDP government of the day had eliminated their deficit by downloading the tax burdens on local governments. And I'm interpreting that the opposition believes we must repeat what they had done in the past.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has assisted the city of Regina over the last 10 years in a significant way. Revenue sharing alone has added up to over \$345 million, providing \$40.5 million in this budget year alone — 157 per cent increase since 2007. In addition, they've provided over \$47 million in project funding for items such as wastewater and drainage projects, recreational infrastructure improvements, seven economic enhancement projects, wastewater treatment and wastewater projects.

In addition, we have the Mosaic stadium project, \$80 million; U of R [University of Regina] capital infusion of 99 million; K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] school enhancements, \$222 million; IPSCO Place and Brandt Centre improvements, 22 and a half million; the Lewvan highway interchange, 18 million; and the Regina bypass.

In the city of Melville, this government over the last 10 years has added over \$9 million of infrastructure and grant funding to provide upgrades to their sewage and water system, waterline and rink upgrades. And they were a major contributor to the new Horizon Credit Union Centre arena complex. In addition,

revenue sharing to the city of Melville of 860,000 this year has added up to just under \$8 million over the last 10 years to the city of Melville. Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this a government that could be accused of downloading on the local government?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, after 10 years of generosity to the city and municipalities around the province, we have hit a bump in the road. We have a \$1.2 billion revenue shortfall. We're asking everyone in the province to help ensure that we have sustainable government services moving into the future. So I guess we have to remind the member from Saskatoon Nutana, I guess, of the billions of dollars of investments that we've gone through in this province in the last 10 years, really to cover up and fill in the shortfalls, the infrastructure shortfalls that we've inherited.

So we've been accused of balancing on the backs of the taxpayers that was prefaced in the article that I referenced earlier. We can talk about the 40 new schools that we've built. How about the new health centres, long-term care facilities? We could talk about the thousands of new professionals that we've added to the provincial economy, including doctors, nurses, teachers. Maybe we should remind the opposition of the thousands of taxpayers who have saved billions of dollars over the last 10 years to the progressive tax changes that we've implemented.

Maybe we need to remind them again of the billions of dollars that we've spent on social services, highways, education, parks, health care. Virtually every ministry has seen a budget that is significantly over the levels of funding that they've had with the previous government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, part of this government's plan is to address the shortfall, including changes to the administration of grants in lieu of taxes paid by the Crowns, and more specifically SaskPower and SaskEnergy. Unfortunately, due to historical wording used to describe various payments provided by our Crowns, we have a significant amount of confusion and misinformation really being thrown around by groups that are being relied on by our municipalities for information.

While payments by SaskPower and SaskEnergy are referred to as grants in lieu of taxes, they're actually based on a flat percentage of utility sales within a municipality and unrelated to the value of property. The reason payments are based on utility sales instead of asset values is that the payments are also used to compensate municipalities for the revenue that they would've been able to generate if they had their own electricity or natural gas distribution systems. These agreements and their history are extremely complex. They're not very transparent and definitely not evenly distributed across the province.

A large number of Saskatchewan communities really do not have these agreements and do not receive these payments from SaskPower or SaskEnergy. An example of the inequality would be the approximately 90 non-city communities that receive SaskEnergy grants-in-lieu that range in yearly payments from \$2,200 a year to \$75,000 a year. How do you explain to the Theodores and the Graysons really of the province why they did not receive these payments in the past? Some of these SaskEnergy agreements originated in the 1950s.

Or there are a couple of exceptions where SaskEnergy actually does pay tax. When SaskEnergy leases a building where the owner paid property tax, there's a flow-through to cover the property tax. Or when SaskEnergy bought property from an owner who did pay property tax, the corporation still pays the tax.

There needs to be a consistent process where everything is the same. Our stakeholders need consistency. Revenue sharing provides consistency. Grants-in-lieu, not so much.

With Power, the payment of grants-in-lieu is based on 5 per cent of electrical revenue collected within incorporated cities and was paid in agreements between SaskPower and the cities. Grants in lieu of taxes originated as part compensation for the revenues that cities lost as a result of transferring their assets and their electrical system to SaskPower when they amalgamated all power services in the '40s, '50s, and '60s. It can be defined as the opportunity cost of not having their own utility.

However it's also interesting to note that there are still two holdouts in the province who did not agree to the original transfers and maintain unique arrangements with the government. More inconsistency in the delivery of our core services to this province.

Now let's also confuse the situation a little more by discussing the municipal surcharge. That was started in the '30s. These were offered as SaskPower Corporation absorbed all the small municipally owned and privately owned electrical companies that were scattered throughout the province. These entities were a significant source of revenue throughout the province.

So it's funny, the rural municipalities really received no municipal surcharge-in-lieu from SaskPower. This was contested by SARM in 2015 when they passed a resolution at their AGM [annual general meeting] requesting that all Crown corporations be required to pay tax on all facilities in the rural municipalities they're situated in, to level the playing field in the utility sector and give fair compensation to these RMs. Ultimately the inconsistency of grants-in-lieu has resulted in significant discrepancies throughout the province. Now is the time to . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — The member's time has expired. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is my first time rising in a 75-minute debate, and I found out I was going to do it about 10 minutes ago. So that's fine. I don't mind a bit of a surprise and a pop quiz, a surprise phone call. A little surprise, that's all right. Right?

But there's some kinds of surprises that are much less welcome. Some kinds of surprises that we just don't enjoy nearly as much, and we've seen a lot of that kind of surprise in this budget and from this government in recent weeks.

We saw the huge surprise of cuts to libraries across the province and cuts to libraries completely in the major cities. People who are counting on those services for access to books, access to computers to look for jobs — surprise, not there anymore. And

now, surprise, they're back. How do you actually have any faith in what's going to happen when you have that kind of yanking around of the public confidence?

Students in schools and university planning ahead for their year ahead with a fixed amount of income, fixed amount of money they've got available — surprise, we're going to cut the universities' budgets significantly, the colleges significantly. Some of your programs won't be there anymore. Your tuition may go well up. Surprise.

Well what about a family who's dealing with the illness or even pending departure of a loved one and wants to have that support in hospital, support for their spiritual needs and want to look to the chaplain in the hospital, want to look to that pastoral care? Surprise, it's gone.

Or people who are counting on the income that they've signed contracts for. The jobs that they are in that have . . . and the mortgages that they have to pay, the responsibilities that they have to pay that they're planning based on the income, based on their salary. Well, surprise, those contracts aren't of much interest to us anymore. Everybody's got to go down by 3.5 per cent. Surprise, if you don't go for it, you might not even have that job.

So all of these big surprises, big surprises without any consultation, without any discussion. We saw an article in the *Leader-Post* yesterday from the editorial board describing the approach of this government as shoot first, ask questions later. They just throw things out, big surprises without any consultation, without any discussion.

When they do consult — and I've certainly been part of consultations in the past — they ask the experts. They ask their own people within the government to come together and give them advice, and they take the opposite direction. They do what they felt like doing in the first place.

Take the example of NORTEP and Northlands. There was a whole process set up by the Minister of Advanced Education to evaluate what should happen with NORTEP. That process gave a recommendation, gave an absolute, clear recommendation not to go down the road of using Northlands College. And well, surprise, we're going to do what we felt like doing in the first place anyway.

But today we're talking about . . . In this motion we're talking about one particular surprise, one giant change that nobody saw coming, which is this massive cut, this \$35.8 million surprise to the cities and towns of this province. And we like to hear . . . or we hear the Premier and the Minister of Government Relations like to suggest that somehow this was discussed: a vague reference at SUMA of everything being on the table; a laundry list of possible options mentioned; oh well, maybe we'll do something with grants-in-lieu. No discussion, no look at how is that going to happen, just all of it gone from one day to the next.

And we've heard from mayors, from the leaders of SUMA that this was a shock, that this was an unprecedented drop in their budgets, a massive change for them and very, very difficult for them to respond to because this is a long-standing program.

And we've heard some of the history and, you know, the fact that it is a bit of a perhaps an arcane model or an archaic model, something that is a bit odd, but it's been there for years and no one saw its absence coming.

[12:00]

A 109 communities, 109 cities and towns around this province that have lost significant amounts of their budget, some seeing up to . . . well originally up to over 50 per cent. Then as it was scaled back, once again we see evidence of this government's shoot first, ask questions later. Throw everything out there and then have to withdraw once they realize that their decisions didn't make sense. But massive cuts to the budgets of some cities and towns, 109 communities. I think every one of us in this legislature, except maybe two, represent one of the cities or towns that have lost funding as a result of this.

And this is on top of a budget that hit cities in numerous other ways. We saw cuts to supports for community rinks, cuts to support for linking highways to the roads of cities. We saw cuts to . . . massive cut and a change in the status of the Meewasin Valley Authority, saw the handing over of the Wascana Centre to the provincial government.

And of course we've seen the increase in PST, which is a big hit for cities, cities that have capital expenditures that are going to go way up with the expansion of PST onto construction, estimated at a million dollars a year just for Saskatoon. That's just from that increase in PST.

So what has the Sask Party response been to the shock and surprise of the civic leaders of this province? Well it hasn't been to say, yes, well this is something we need to discuss. No, it's been really pointing at the cities, pointing at them and saying, you have too much money in your reserves. There's too much money around, and you need to drain those reserves. That's where you need to go. That's where you need to go.

Because that's the favourite activity of this government. When they make an unpopular decision they blame the victim. They blame the people that are being hurt the most. And the other favourite response to all kinds of problems is to drain reserves. They've drained their own reserves. We have no rainy day fund. We have no plan to deal with, we've clearly had no plan to deal with what is obviously a fluctuating part of our economy, which is resource revenues. And yet here we are with no rainy day fund because this is a government that likes to drain reserves. And having drained its own reserves, it's going after schools and cities and other institutions and telling them, you know, we've emptied our own pockets; it's time for you to empty yours.

So what is this actually going to mean for cities? What is this surprise cut, what is this big change going to actually mean for them? Well their options are very few. They can either . . . You know the province has all kinds of options. The province could run a deficit. The province could have chosen not to cut corporate income tax. The province could have chosen not to cut personal income tax on the wealthiest people of the province. Those are options we had. They didn't need to do this. What do the cities and towns have for options? Very little: minimal tax options, most of it property tax; charging for

services. So they're either going to have to increase the cost for services, increase the property taxes, or decrease the services that they offer.

So basically what you've done is you've . . . What this government has done, what we've seen happen is the passing on of the financial difficulties — which are the result of the financial mismanagement of this government — passing that on directly to the people in the cities and towns of this province and not taking any of the blame for what they've done, just forcing it on to Saskatoon. We've already seen Saskatoon and other cities have to increase property taxes — 1 per cent hike in Saskatoon — and wage freezes. We've got Regina musing about service cuts and facility closures. It's clear that this Sask Party surprise will be passed on to Saskatchewan residents.

Because this is already, this is already a levy that exists. It's already a levy from ratepayers that's been described. I was speaking to the Minister for SaskEnergy last night, and he described this, his official described it as a flow through from the ratepayer to the municipalities. And you know, we could discuss whether that makes sense, whether it's right to have that flow through, whether this is the kind of program that needs to continue. Was it the right way? Should we remodel how those funds get to cities?

But instead of doing that, instead of that discussion, it was just yoiink, a big surprise, and it's gone. But the flow through hasn't gone anywhere, and my colleague from Saskatoon Nutana described this very well. They're still paying the grants-in-lieu. SaskEnergy's still paying the grants-in-lieu. SaskPower's still paying them. They're just paying it to the GRF now instead of to the cities.

That just makes no sense. We have a model. We have a system by which funds can flow from Crown corporations, from the CIC to the GRF. But now you've established this permanent leak of funds just slipping out a side door from the Crowns to the GRF. It's not sensible. It's surprising and it's strange. And I think we need to have a better consultation and not this kind of surprise in the future. Thank you.

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege to enter into this debate, the 75-minute debate. It's been a while since I have entered into a debate like this, especially the 75-minute debate. They say that, you know, speaking in the House if you haven't for a while — and I have spoken on different things — it's like riding a bike. I don't know if anybody has been off a bike for a very long time and tried to ride one again. It isn't that easy. I tried this fall, to tell you the honest truth, Mr. Speaker. But it is a bit like riding a bike, I guess.

When I think of the 75-minute debate and I think of different speeches that I've been able to give in this House, certain ones kind of stick out in your mind. Others you choose to forget, and I've got more that I've chose to forget than I do remember. But I do have to talk about the last time . . . not the last time, one of the very . . . It was the very first time that I had the opportunity to stand in this House and enter into a 75-minute debate. And

it's a little ironic because that topic — and I remember it very well, sitting on the other side of course — it was about tax revolts. And some in this room may remember tax revolts, but I certainly had been elected right around that time, '99, and those tax revolts were going on through '99-2000.

The interesting part about speaking and speaking now is the person that I followed with the tax revolt 75-minute debate was the member from Melville. And you know, although the person has changed, that voice is awfully familiar. There's this booming voice that comes from Melville. It starts down here, and it's really quite strong and loud when he talks about tax revolts in rural Saskatchewan. That used to be the member from Melville and still is the member from Melville. But it was tax revolts across the province because people were totally unhappy with the government of the day, which of course was the former government, the NDP government.

And people were having town hall meetings, you know, and I went to a lot of them. In fact, I remember, talking of that particular speech, it must've been a memorable one because I still remember talking about the different ones. And it was like a notch in the belt. You'd go to another town, and there would be people from the rural, people from urban, all meeting in the town hall, whether it was in Lang that I was in; I was in Montmartre. I was in a lot of communities around that southeast part of the province, as people were so upset with the way the government was dealing with the education portion of property tax.

Now we're talking in this motion about grants-in-lieu, but it is about rural Saskatchewan, and some of the effects that governments have. And I remember at that time going to a, I believe it was a SARM convention, and the former premier, who I have a lot of respect for, Lorne Calvert, was the Premier at the time, standing up in front of the delegates at SARM and saying status quo is not on when it came to education portion of property tax. And every year we'd come in here, and it was the same old thing. So I don't know what his definition of "status quo" was, and the rest of the province's definition, but it wasn't aligned because they never did do anything on the education portion of property tax even though there was tax revolt after tax revolt after tax revolt.

And I think those tax revolts are evident in this House even today. When you look across the way and you see all of them looking down at papers and not engaging — I guess they shouldn't be engaging in this debate — but all looking down. You know, there's a reason why you look at every one of those members, and they either have a Saskatoon, Regina, or P.A. [Prince Albert] in front of their name, except for Cumberland and Athabasca, because they haven't got a seat in rural Saskatchewan because they had turned their backs on rural Saskatchewan for 16 years, and rural Saskatchewan hasn't forgot.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I hear the member . . . I also wanted, also compliment the member from Melville-Saltcoats, and the member from Cypress Hills. And to the members opposite, remember those two constituencies when you're asking questions — the member from Saltcoats, Melville-Saltcoats, and the member from Cypress Hills. Don't worry about Indian Head-Milestone. But, Mr. Speaker, they raise the point very

well about, you know, what this government has done over the 10 years that we've had.

Mr. Speaker, even when I . . . and I'm not going to get into kind of what we've done because they've handled it very, very well, but I just want to look at the motion itself, and the wording of this motion. It's really quite amazing. It's only five sentences or five lines long, at about 14 font, so it's not a lot of words. But when you look at what they've actually said, I can agree with the first part if I was in opposition, "That this Assembly condemns the government . . ." because that's what opposition is supposed to do. But after that, there is not really not much in this motion that I really am surprised that any of those members could support either.

It says deep cuts and unexpected cuts for towns and cities. Now deep cuts, I'm not so sure that when you look at the cuts to the grants-in-lieu . . . And I still think the term grants-in-lieu is really not a proper term for what this topic is about, because grants-in-lieu, most people think of grants-in-lieu of taxes. Those are still in place. In fact, Mr. Speaker, money going to the municipal sector is \$434 million, a huge outlay to the municipal sector. But I don't think what we're seeing here is deep cuts.

Now if we wanted to talk about deep cuts, I'm sure we could back a little ways. And if we wanted to talk about deep cuts, I think we should go to the municipal sector and say, you could do the revenue sharing that we're giving you today, or we could go back to what the NDP had given. Now that would be a deep cut, Mr. Speaker. Because certainly what we're dealing with isn't a deep cut.

We could go from \$257 million is what is in this budget for revenue sharing, or we could go back to 130 or cut it by over half, not quite half, down to 130. That would be classed as a deep cut. What this is is certainly significant to municipalities, but you're not seeing tax revolt after tax revolt. We're hearing from some councils. We're talking to mayors and councils. It has an impact, but it isn't what I would call deep cuts.

The other thing it talks about in this motion is it says unexpected cuts. Really? Really? Municipalities did not expect some sort of cut coming in this budget? That's what the motion says. Now you support that, that municipalities didn't see anything coming. Because quite frankly, I had talked to a number of people leading up to the budget and what people were saying from around the province is, would you guys hurry up and deliver the budget because we're expecting something. We just want to know what it is so that we can operate. So it wasn't unexpected cuts. They were expecting some form of a cut.

Did they know it was this particular grant from SaskPower or SaskEnergy? Did they expect grants-in-lieu? Could have been. They didn't know. Could it have been revenue sharing? Could have we done a deep, unexpected cut and go back to the way the NDP was at \$130 million?

So, Mr. Speaker, this motion in itself, the wording in the motion in itself just is not accurate. It also says axing grants-in-lieu. Quite frankly, that is not right. It does not axe grants-in-lieu. Grants-in-lieu of taxes is still in place. And it took a long time

for the minister, who has done a very good job, the Minister for Municipal Affairs, to educate. Even us, myself, didn't know the difference between what we were talking about through SaskPower, SaskEnergy grants-in-lieu and other municipal sharing. I think people have got the idea now, although the members opposite never did really kind of cue into that.

Mr. Speaker, I've only got a minute and 12. Ten minutes goes a lot faster after quite a few years in this House compared to when we first started.

It talks about raising taxes . . . I've only got about a minute left here. It talks about raising taxes. The member from Prince Albert Northcote says in her own motion that this is going to force municipalities to raise taxes. I ask that member, what did Prince Albert do? It didn't raise taxes because of grants-in-lieu or because of this change. It raised taxes by 1 per cent, but it was on their own doing not because of what the decisions of government.

So even the member from Prince Albert Northcote who talked about . . . I was really amazed. She said, when she was going through the different communities . . . I know there are 500 communities in this province; I didn't know carrot knife was one of them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, so this motion as a whole is completely wrong. It talks . . . The final one is a decade long of mismanagement, scandal, and waste. Mr. Speaker, absolutely wrong because, if a decade long of mismanagement and waste puts 51 members on this side and only 11 on that side, Mr. Speaker, I think the public know different.

Mr. Speaker, I only have seven seconds left, so I will not be supporting the motion, Mr. Speaker, not any of the words in this motion.

[12:15]

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

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the speeches opposite, we heard the members talk about how we are not valuing our municipal partners. Mr. Speaker, this couldn't be further from the truth. Let's look at the city of Prince Albert where revenue sharing in our 2017-18 budget is \$6,769,998. That's a whopping 126 per cent increase since 2008. Mr. Speaker, to the member from Prince Albert Northcote, simple question, yes or no: do you agree that revenue sharing is providing the cities the predictable funding that our municipalities need? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Well I would challenge the member from Battleford to go and talk to the municipalities and the leaders in these municipalities that are affected and see what they think about their revenue sharing now that they're losing all of these cuts, all the cuts that this government is doing to those communities.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know cities and towns in and near the city of Regina have been hit really hard. And this is a question for the member from Melville-Saltcoats. We know Yorkton was hit hard, the highest per capita hit; Langenburg; many other communities. Melville's cut of \$400,000 represents about a 13.4 per cent increase in taxes.

So communities have been left reeling and mayors are speaking out, Mr. Speaker. Why did the Sask Party hide this — ripping up these contracts — from communities, and what does he say to local mayors like Mayor Maloney of Yorkton, Mayor Streeklasky of Melville, and Mayor Fogg of Langenburg?

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

Mr. Kaeding: — So we've had those difficult decisions with each of our stakeholders. Whether it's villages, towns, cities, every one of them has various . . . [inaudible] . . . to their operational grants. We've had those discussions. We've had intimate talks. We've tried to find efficiencies with each one of the entities. We've had great discussions with them.

They understand, they understand the situation that this province is in. They've been part of the benefits to what this province has had in the last 10 years. They've been able to take advantage of that. They've also been willing to take part in a little bit of what we've been asking to take back from them. They've found ways to get by. They've found different ways of saving efficiencies within their systems. What they want to do is they want to get back to business. They want to get back to work. They want to get back to running the province.

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

Ms. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier was very clear that everything was on the table when it came to the provincial budget. We heard from municipalities that they wanted us to not touch revenue sharing. We listened.

Mr. Speaker, to the member from Prince Albert Northcote: we are meeting the challenge, but they offer no alternatives. In order to address the billion-dollar shortfall in revenues facing our province, what would that member cut instead?

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

Ms. Rancourt: — I would also challenge that member to go talk to the municipalities because my understanding is that they were going to sit down and come up with some alternatives, but the minister didn't even allow that. And so consultation is not saying everything is on the table. That is ridiculous, and these are your municipal leaders that you should be working with as partners.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, as we see, the way that this government has done this is they've clawed this money back from the municipalities. But where are they putting it, Mr. Speaker? Are they leaving it with our Crowns? Or are they putting it back in the GRF? That's a direct runaround on what the Crown Investments Corporation is.

So I want to know from the member from Cypress Hills is whether or not he agrees with this government's approach to going around, going . . . Oh, the Minister of Finance is getting all excited here. He's saying it's for programs, but we know that CIC is responsible for those . . . [inaudible] . . . How can you go around CIC and do it this shortcut way?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills. Order.

[Interjections]

Mr. Steele: — I couldn't hear the statement. I couldn't hear the member. Sorry, I don't go around much here.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, thank you for the floor. I will ask the member the question again. How do you condone, how do you condone . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. The Chair needs to hear the question and also the member that the question is being posed to. That member also needs to hear the question. So I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the member from Cypress Hills: how do you condone the direct end run around Crown Investments Corporation and why we have dividends coming out of our Crowns and just yanking that money and sticking it directly in the GRF?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Will the member from Regina Walsh Acres come to order, and the other government members and opposition members, please?

I recognize the member.

Mr. Steele: — Communities, health care, speaks for itself. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Dennis: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. Our government takes the relationship of municipalities seriously. That is why we created a stable revenue sharing. Since we formed the government in 2007, Saskatoon has seen 161 per cent increase

in municipal revenue sharing. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from Saskatoon Meewasin. Why have your members voted against every budget that has supported stable revenue sharing in municipalities?

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to represent Saskatoon Meewasin and very concerned about the impacts of this budget on that community and on my home city of Saskatoon. When you look at cuts to the Meewasin Valley Authority, you look at this cut to grants-in-lieu, you look at all the other ways in which cities have been harmed in this budget, of course we would vote against this budget. This city . . .

Every one of these budgets in which you have done damage to this province, we have been happy to vote against it. I'm happy to have voted against my first budget. This was my first budget, and I voted very happily against a decision, against all of the decisions in this budget, including the decision to cut grants-in-lieu without any warning to the cities who have now had to cope without any chance to plan ahead, no chance to cope.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Since the member from Indian Head-Milestone seems to have a good understanding of what grants-in-lieu are, or seems to think he does, can he explain why SaskTel was immune to the cuts through the grants-in-lieu program?

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

Mr. McMorris: — You know, I don't want to correct the member opposite, but I have to on a regular basis, in that SaskTel is not immune to grants-in-lieu. They pay grants-in-lieu of property tax in many communities across the province. Talk about not understanding, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the revenue sharing and the money that's gone into municipalities across the piece, urban and rural, over the last 10 years of this government, Mr. Speaker, we'll put our record up to the NDP's record of no revenue sharing, not being a consistent revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker, any day of the week.

Mr. Speaker, it is difficult decisions, but what people are saying to us on a regular basis is a balanced budget in two years far outweighs any of the other provinces and especially the federal government, Mr. Speaker, because this government has a plan to get to balance, and they're accepting of that.

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

Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has been meeting the challenge since we took office. Although we have made some tough decisions, we value our municipal partners. In Prince Albert specifically, we have invested \$8

million in water treatment plant and reservoir upgrades and over \$12 million in 12 different projects in the municipal economic enhancement program, only to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, to the member from Prince Albert Northcote: does she acknowledge that our government is providing the dollars for municipalities to build the infrastructure that they need?

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Well I'd invite that member to come to Prince Albert. I'd like to show him our Victoria Hospital that's overflowing with patients and oftentimes not even taking patients, where this government said they were going to do something about it. They spent \$2 million evaluating the situation and that just went down the drain because nothing has happened.

We don't have another bridge. We always had this talk that you're going to develop another bridge — nothing. So don't like . . . Prince Albert needs more water reservoirs and now you're getting gutted by these grants-in-lieu. And now we're trying to figure out what we're going to do, what we're going to do to invest in our reservoirs. And what are we going to do about our health care crisis? And what are we going to do about our bridge?

The Deputy Speaker: — The time for the 75-minute debate has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 3 — Mining Investment in Saskatchewan

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Ms. Carr.]

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

Mr. Doke: — Cut Knife, not carrot knife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support the motion put forward by the member from Estevan:

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

According to the just released Fraser Institute 2016 annual global survey of mining executives, they gave Saskatchewan a gold star and declaring it the most attractive place in the world for mining companies to invest.

Missing a good speech here. I don't know.

An Hon. Member: — Yes, they're all leaving.

Mr. Doke: — They attribute Saskatchewan's competitive tax regimes and their effective permitting procedures, certainty surrounding environmental regulations, and land claims as some of the key reasons for the outstanding rating. This moves us up the inevitable position of being ranked second in the same category in 2015. I believe the minister summarized it well when he says:

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

He also added:

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

Mr. Speaker, making it easy to do business provides investment and opportunity for the residents of Saskatchewan. We will dive into the value of our opportunity in a minute; however, we must also note that our poor policy also results in reduced opportunities. Unfortunately, the fellow province to the west has seen their mining attractiveness rating become severely downgraded after their politics changed. They were once listed at 14th on the index and slid significantly towards 47th place overall on the attractive index, placing them with Russia, Guyana, Colorado, and California based on difficulties companies have existing, and attempted to develop new projects. Mr. Speaker, policy does matter.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have recognized this potential since the province was signed into Confederation. Bear with me as I provide a little historical perspective on the Saskatchewan mining advantage.

In 1880, the first commercial coal mine was open near Roche Percee. Commercial clay was produced in 1886 in the Estevan, Bruno, and Claybank areas. The Bienfait coal mine started production in 1905. Copper and zinc was discovered in 1910, gold in 1916, nickel, copper, platinum and palladium, gold, and silver in 1923; uranium in 1935. Potash was found in Radville area in 1942 with the first attempt to mine potash actually occurring in Unity area in 1951.

An Hon. Member: — Were you there?

Mr. Doke: — Actually a year later, thank you.

Actual long-term potash production began in Esterhazy in 1961, which ushered in the great potash rush of Saskatchewan with mines being built in Belle Plaine, Saskatoon, Allan, Langham, Vanscoy, Colonsay, and Rocanville, all beginning in the 1960s. Uranium began to be aggressively mined in the early- to mid-'70s in the Athabasca Basin, found in northern Saskatchewan.

Diamonds have been found throughout the 1900s, but active

stakes were taken out in the early 1980s in the Sturgeon Lake area. Exploration for rare earth elements began north of Uranium City in 1990. Kaolin, or china clay, was produced in 2008.

Mr. Speaker, rounding out the broad range of commodities mined in Saskatchewan also includes potassium sulphate in Wynyard; sodium sulphate in Chaplin; salt in Saskatoon, Esterhazy, and Unity, which I will talk a little about in a little bit later; and bentonite in Wilcox.

[12:30]

Mr. Speaker, the benefits of mining are all around us every day. For example, 50 per cent of the power generated in Saskatchewan comes from coal mined in southern Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan is Canada's third-largest coal producer, averaging about one-sixth of Canadian annual production, with hundreds of years of lignite coal resources at current production rates. No active proposals for new coal mines have been proposed since the 2009 economic downturn. Underground coal gasification and coal to liquids had then been proposed as alternate end fuels given the climate change and challenges of burning coal.

Two of Saskatchewan's three coal mines — Poplar River and Boundary dam — produce coal for sale under long-term contract to SaskPower for consumption at power plants near the mine sites at prices which attract a net for a profit margin. Due to climate changes, policies at the Bienfait mine, Canada's longest lived mine, in operation since 1905, has lost its historic coal markets of Ontario and Manitoba power plants and faces a legislative ban effective January 1st, 2016 on sales to Manitoba hog barns.

The Bienfait mine continues making char at the Bienfait char plant for barbeque charcoals and active carbon, as it . . . activated carbon plant. SaskPower now purchases Bienfait coal to supply for a supplement to Boundary dam mine purchases.

Mr. Speaker, virtually everything around us — from computers, jewellery, cars, windows, cell phones, wallboards, cosmetics, medical treatments, vitamins, toothpaste — all contain some kind of mineral, a mineral that was brought up from underneath our Saskatchewan soil. Mr. Speaker, if we don't grow it, we probably mine it.

Saskatchewan is the largest potash producer in the world. Mr. Speaker, potash production in Saskatchewan has been continuous since 1962 when Mosaic completed its K1 mine at Esterhazy. The potash reserves in Saskatchewan are massive. By conservative estimates, Saskatchewan could supply the world demand at current levels for several hundred years.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan potash industry typically accounts for approximately 30 per cent of the world production, directly employs about 5,000 people, and contributes to the livelihood of thousands more. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan potash production reached a record in 2015 on the strength of a strong world potash demand and to make up for a large decrease in inventories after record sales in 2014.

Mr. Speaker, expansions of product capability were completed

at nine mines — Agrium, Mosaic Belle Plaine, Mosaic Colonsay, Mosaic Esterhazy, PCS [Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Inc.] Allan, PCS Lanigan, PCS Cory, PCS Patience Lake, and PCS Rocanville in the past eight years — increasing the annual capability of the Saskatchewan potash industry to 18.4 megatonnes for 2017. It is estimated that Agrium Inc., Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, and Mosaic Company have committed 13.5 billion collectively to expand Saskatchewan's production capacity by about 70 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, K+S Potash is spending 4.1 billion to develop a solution mine in Saskatchewan which is scheduled to commence production, I believe, next week. And currently there are several other companies considering construction of potash mines, including global mining giant BHP Billiton.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the potash reception last night, it was noted that prices are starting to climb a bit and a new player in the game being the country of Brazil. Mr. Speaker, the United States typically accounts for approximately 45 per cent of Saskatchewan's potash exports. Latin America and large Asian offshore markets of China, India, Japan, Malaysia, Korea, and Indonesia make up most of the remaining 55 per cent of Saskatchewan's potash exports.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan uranium — I'd just like to give a few facts on that. And then I will close with the great salt mines of Unity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan accounted for 22 per cent of the world's primary uranium production in 2015 and was the second largest producer behind Kazakhstan. Saskatchewan has been producing uranium continuously since 1953 and is recognized as a long-term and stable source of uranium. Uranium production is from the Athabasca Basin in northern Saskatchewan which contains the largest high-grade uranium deposits in the world and has a significant geological potential for the discovery of additional deposits.

Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Easy, Bill, easy. Mr. Deputy Speaker, production in 2015 was from three operations: McArthur River, Key Lake, Rabbit Lake, and Cigar Lake. McClean Lake was about 13 310 tonnes of uranium. The Cigar Lake mine, which commenced processing of the ore at McClean Lake in 2014, produced about 4539 tonnes, and 2015 will ramp up to 6924 tonnes per year.

In April 2016, the Rabbit Lake mine, which produced 1.6 thousand tonnes in 2015, was suspended due to market conditions. The Cigar Lake and McArthur River operations have announced a six-week production shutdown in 2017 but do not forecast reduced volumes, for a total forecast production for 2016 . . . was 13 483 tonnes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit about the salt mine, salt mines in Unity, as soon as I find it here. I've got lots of info here. Mr. Deputy Speaker, salt was discovered in the Unity area in the mid-1940s while oil exploration was under way. Large pockets of natural gas were also discovered about 10 miles south of Unity at the same time.

In the late 1940s, the Dominion Tar and Chemical Company decided to close its salt works in northeastern Alberta near Fort

McMurray in favour of a more strategic location. Our plant was built in 1948 with production . . . and was started under the name of Prairie Salt Company. The Compass Minerals Canada Corp. plant located at KILLSQUAW LAKES, about two miles east of Unity, has been in continuous production since 1949. The site was picked because it had the ingredients for a successful operation, that is: a good bed of salt, a water supply, a commercially viable natural gas supply, and rail facilities for transportation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, using a process known as solution mining, the plant injects water into the salt deposit about 1200 metres underground. The salt bed is then about 120 metres thick in this area. It starts in the Northwest Territories where it outcrops and slopes downward as it extends through parts of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the southwest parts of Manitoba into North Dakota. Since the start of the operation, eight brine wells have been drilled in an area of about 400 metres south and west of the plant.

The plant currently operates on brine wells numbers 7 and 8. Mr. Deputy Speaker, salt dissolves into water injected into the well and then results in saturated brine is returned to the surface where it is evaporated, basically boiled, to recover the salt. The salt is filtered and dried, then processed. The original capacity of the plant was about 65 000 tonnes a year with the three 10-foot diameter evaporators operating in a triple-effect system. In 1963 production capacity was increased to about 100 000 tonnes per year, expanding the heating surfaces of three evaporators, and have been operating that way ever since. The plant now does about 150 000 tonnes a year.

Just a couple other notes here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This plant employs about 60 people from the Unity area and supports and uses many local businesses for its supplies. As well the company attempts to be a good corporate citizen by supporting many of the activities within Unity and district, and is probably one of the reasons why Unity has always had a strong ball team, hockey team, because of the jobs created.

During the 1980s, over \$2 million was spent on the Unity plant on pollution abatement and environmental controls. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, another couple of points of note are that since 1997 the company's been selling their used brine wells to Tervita. They fill these holes. The fill holes were made from the waste from the upstream oil industry — and a nice revenue stream for Tervita, a great way of handling an environmental issue, and the town of Unity gets a number of new, good-paying jobs.

2017 is not only Canada's 150th birthday, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's also the trademark of Sifto Salt's 150th birthday. Mr. Deputy Speaker, last time I was on my feet I talked about a possible way of handling those people that don't comply in this Assembly, those who don't want to withdraw and apologize or those with tardiness here, whatever. I have talked with John Goschok, manager of the salt mine, and he is prepared to have these people come and work there to pay off their offence. If that works for you, I would gladly deliver these people on the Thursdays when I go back and that . . . [inaudible] . . . Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time. I'm done.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cypress

Hills.

Mr. Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I support the attractive mining policies of the government, and now I further move to adjourn debate.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:41.]

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