



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

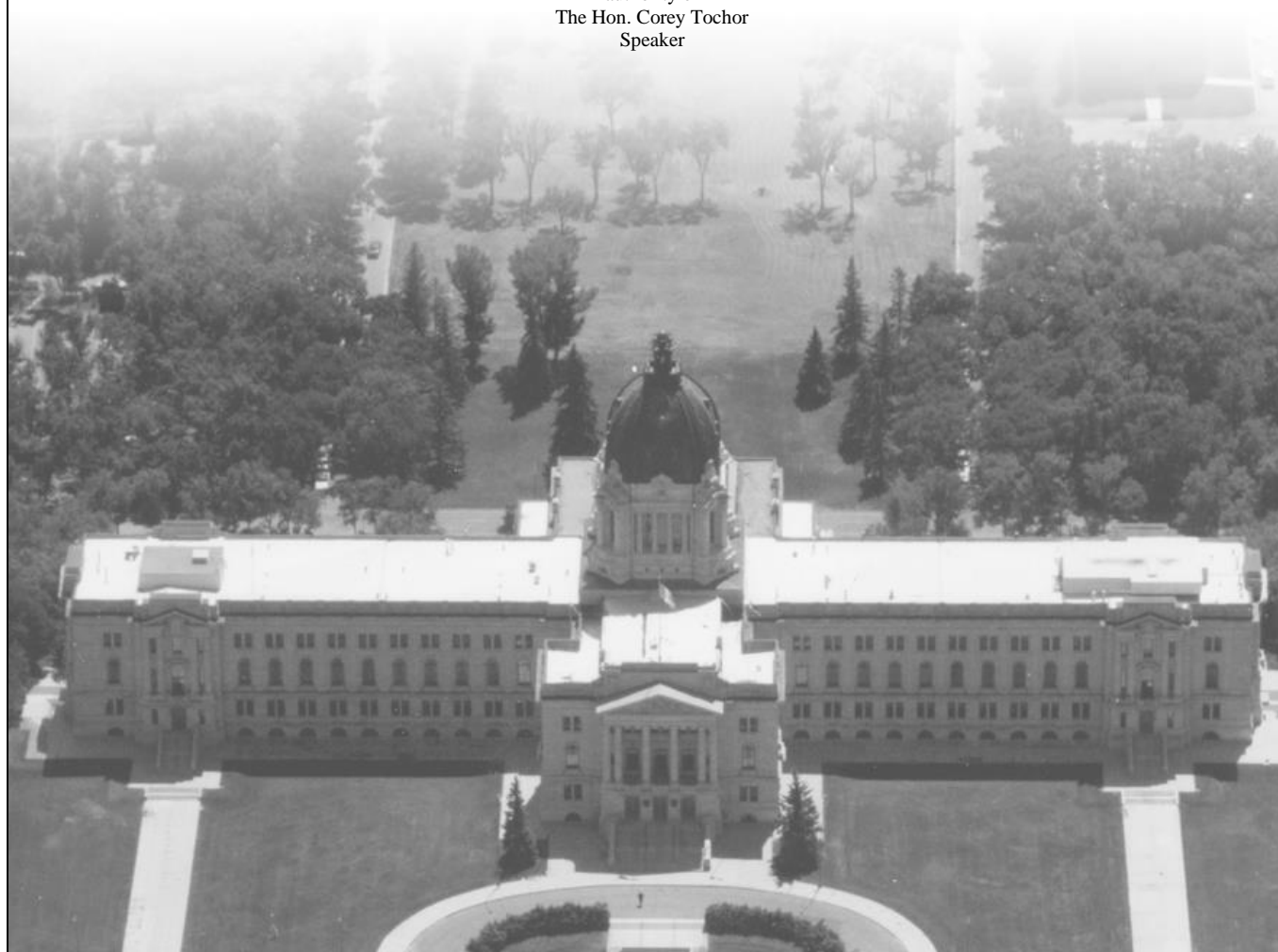
of the

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

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Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)

Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

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

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Provincial Secretary.

Hon. Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce some very special guests to the Legislative Assembly. Seated in your gallery, first of all, are the senior international officers, Melinda Carter and Amy Standish. And accompanying them on his first official visit to our province is His Excellency Bálint Ódor, ambassador of Hungary to Canada.

The ambassador is accompanied by Mr. László Sinka, deputy head of mission and trade commissioner for the embassy of Hungary. The ambassador has a very busy schedule today in Regina. He met with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Economy, with the Lieutenant Governor, and yourself, Mr. Speaker, and myself. And later today, he'll travel to Saskatoon for meetings with the Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce, Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership, and with various research facilities at the University of Saskatchewan, including the Canadian Light Source.

During his visit, we are exploring several areas of mutual economic interest and potential future collaboration between our two jurisdictions. Our exports to Hungary last year were primarily the agricultural products. Saskatchewan in turn imported mostly transmission and agro parts from Hungary. And we see room for growth in our trading relationship with Hungary, so we look forward to strengthening it.

The ambassador's visit is thus timely. It fosters a conversation. We need to have greater co-operation between Saskatchewan and Hungary; in having that conversation, we look at some historical ties of our province. The Hungarian settlers were nearly 28,000 Saskatchewan residents, and they can all trace their ancestry back to Hungary. Esterhazy, Wakaw were all settled by Hungarian immigrants.

So traditions are part of our Saskatchewan mosaic, and a growing relationship with Hungary will be an important part of Saskatchewan's future. Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of the Assembly join me in welcoming this very valuable delegation. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I too would like to introduce and recognize the ambassador. We had a chance to meet in my office earlier today and shared some of our shared heritage, such as I'm part Hungarian as well. And we will be touring the Kaposvar Church in my hometown area of Esterhazy on Sunday with the ambassador, and I look forward to learning a little bit more about my heritage and the great connection between Canada and Hungary. So I'd like everyone to please welcome him to Saskatchewan again.

While I'm on my feet, I'd like to introduce a couple of other people in my gallery: Conni and Ron Larson, who is also in the

Speaker's gallery up there. Conni works in my office back in Saskatoon.

Joining with them is our returning summer student for the second year now. We're very lucky to have Cherrise Esplin, who is studying business at the U of R [University of Regina], also back working during the summer in the Speaker's office. So could everyone once again please welcome them to their 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 Speaker and the member opposite in welcoming His Excellency Bálint Ódor, ambassador of Hungary to Canada, and certainly Mr. László Sinka, the deputy head of mission and trade commissioner for the embassy of Hungary.

Mr. Speaker, the ties between Saskatchewan and Hungary are deep and abiding, and certainly the very founding of this province was a time that had seen many people come from Hungary to here in Saskatchewan. And then certainly after 1956, there was a great wave of emigration that we in Saskatchewan benefited very much from. So those ties are historical and abiding. And it's good to see these individuals here today in the gallery and good to hear about that further work of building a connection between Hungary and Saskatchewan so that we might benefit together.

So I join with the Speaker and the minister in welcoming these important individuals to our Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Mr. Bonk: — Mr. Speaker, I too would like to welcome the ambassador, Bálint Ódor, and László Sinka, the trade commissioner from Hungary.

Hungary is a place that is also very near and dear to my heart. I spent nearly a quarter of my life in Hungary. And having married a Hungarian, I'm not allowed to forget how nice it is.

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Hungarian.]

So I'd like to ask all my colleagues to welcome these special guests to our legislature.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also welcome a special class that we have from Grenfell School today. This is 24 grade 7 students from Grenfell High School. And I'd like to just say a special hello to a few of my cousins I have. Arianna Osiowy is here, and Michaela Drinnan, and Ty Lowenberg. And they're accompanied today by Ms. Giambattista or Ms. G., as they call her. And also accompanying them are chaperones Karen Lowenberg, who's also a cousin of mine, and Leah Wilde. So I'd like all my colleagues to welcome them to their legislature.

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

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce Phyllis Hallatt, president of Child Find Saskatchewan, who has joined the legislature today, and accompanying her is Colleen Whitedeer. If you wouldn't mind just giving a wave to everyone.

Child Find Saskatchewan was first established in 1984. This organization works across our province to educate and advocate for the protection and rights of children and youth. Child Find Saskatchewan, along with their network of volunteers across our province, works hard to highlight issues related to missing children. When I was a summer student working for Canada Customs at the border, that was my job, was to coordinate the Child Find activities at that time.

They promote the message that a missing child is everyone's responsibility and all children have a right to be safe. I would like to thank Ms. Hallatt and the many individuals involved with Child Find Saskatchewan for making a difference in our community, and I ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly today.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister opposite in welcoming Phyllis Hallatt and Colleen Whitedeer from Child Find Saskatchewan, I'm sure, here in part to pay homage to Missing Persons Week and the important work that you do through your organization, helping to find the lost children of our community. So I'd like to ask that all members join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. I'd like to join with the minister and the member opposite in welcoming Phyllis Hallatt here today. As many of you know, the Ministry of Justice has a long-standing relationship with Child Find, and so we're happy that we can continue that relationship to support the very good work that they do. And as is already mentioned, Mr. Speaker, accompanying Phyllis is Colleen Whitedeer.

I attended the Missing Persons Week ceremony this morning at the MacKenzie Art Gallery, and Colleen gave a very, very moving comment, a moving history of the fact that her brother's been missing for almost three years now, Mr. Speaker. And it reminds us how important it is to listen to the stories of family members who, people have gone missing so that we can work to help alleviate some of those tragedies in the future, Mr. Speaker. So I'd like to welcome both these individuals to their legislature as well.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to add my welcome to Colleen Whitedeer and Phyllis Hallatt as well. I've had a chance to get to know Colleen over the last few years and been very impressed with her advocacy and activism. We hear a lot about missing and murdered indigenous women and girls,

which is so extremely important, but I know that Colleen has also brought forward the voice of concern over the men from those communities that are missing, and even walked from northern Saskatchewan all the way to the legislature to bring that in the past, and so I value that advocacy and congratulate her and welcome her today.

And while I'm on my feet I also want to welcome Mr. Guy Caron. Guy is a Member of Parliament and a leadership candidate for the federal NDP [New Democratic Party]. He is the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, which is a pretty long name so I had to write it down. But I'm very pleased to see you here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to introduce him, et je le souhaite bienvenue ici à la législature et bonne chance dans la course à la chefferie. Merci.

[Translation: And I welcome him here to the legislature, and good luck in the leadership race. Thank you.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the recipients of this year's Agriculture Student Scholarship. The Saskatchewan Agriculture Student Scholarship is an important part of the Ministry of Agriculture's initiative to support the future of youth within the agriculture industry.

Each year the Government of Saskatchewan recognizes four young people for their passion and dedication to agriculture. This year's applicants were required to submit a video or essay based on their own personal food story. There were many excellent videos and essays submitted by young individuals from across the province. Much consideration went into selecting the 2017 finalists.

This year's winners are bright, innovative, and represent the future of agriculture. It's young leaders such as these four who will drive the future success of the industry. Their passion to share their own personal agriculture stories with others is inspiring. I'm confident that they each have a very promising future ahead of them.

I ask the scholarship winners to please stand as I announce their names. Amanda Mitchell of Bracken, Saskatchewan. Amanda has been awarded the grand prize scholarship of \$4,000 to put towards her agricultural studies. Amanda's winning video submission tells the story of a piece of bread, describing her farm's role in wheat production from seeding to harvest and beyond. Amanda will be attending the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] in the fall to study agronomy.

Our three runner-up winners of this year's scholarship were each awarded \$2,000 to put towards their agricultural studies. And the winners, in no particular order, are Brayden Fraser of Churchbridge, who will be attending the U of S in the fall to work toward a Bachelor of Science in agribusiness; Rachael Enns of Osler, who has enrolled in the animal science program at the U of S; Dena Lamb of Regina, who will also be attending the U of S to work toward degrees in crop science and food and by-product science.

Brayden is passionate about food security and wants to learn how to maximize food production in an efficient, economic, and environmental friendly way. Rachael cares deeply for animals and wants to improve animal care and production by looking at housing, nutrition, and breeding. Dena understands the impact that agriculture has on the world and wants to help find a way to grow enough food to feed the growing population in a way that respects and cares for the environment.

Thank you to each of you for your work and dedication to your education and to the agriculture industry. I ask all members to join me as I congratulate these four individuals on this tremendous accomplishment. I wish you all the best.

[13:45]

The Speaker: — I'd like to compliment the Minister of Agriculture on asking for extended leave before his extended introduction. I would hope that all members would follow his lead in the future as well, asking for extended leave.

I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the minister opposite in congratulating these four brilliant young students on their success in the video competition. Certainly I think having a commitment to agriculture, to food, to animals, to the environment, that's going to make our province stronger. And it's with your kind of commitment and your interest in what's going to happen in the future, that's going to make a difference for agriculture in Saskatchewan.

So we're very proud of you and just really want to thank you for doing the work you needed to get into the competition, but also in your upcoming studies at the university. It'll be an exciting time and I think, you know, you are going to be the future of agriculture in Saskatchewan, so I think we're on a good track here. So on behalf of the official opposition, I would like to join with the minister opposite and welcome you to your Legislative Assembly and wish you all the best in the future.

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would respectfully request an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I have the pleasure of introducing the Saskatchewan athletes, coaches, and mission staff who represented our country in the 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Austria. They are seated in your gallery. Why don't you give us a wave? All right. Thanks very much.

Today we are welcoming athletes and coaches from Saskatchewan, all of whom who've either won gold or silver medals at the games. First we have Ron Brandt from Saskatoon. Ron brought home gold from Austria in the 4 x 100 relay. Congratulations, Ron — there it is. Absolutely. You bet.

Also seated in the gallery is Terry Livingstone. In Austria, Terry won the gold in the 777-metre race. Now I understand, Mr. Speaker, that some of our MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] were involved in a race this weekend, and maybe you can compare notes with them and give them a little advice there, Terry. Terry, congratulations on your gold medal win.

Seated in the gallery, Mr. Speaker, we also have a number of athletes and coaches from the Team Canada West floor hockey team. Their dedication and teamwork won silver in Austria. With us here today from Team Canada West floor hockey team are Chris Anderson, Dean Boechler, Robbie Bomboir, Kyle Couture, Kyrren Dean, Shane Haddad, Tyler Haddad, Zane Lauritsen, Lee Salzl, Mike Snell, and head coach Ryan Unruh, coach Abigail Frasz, as well as coach Sheldon Dean.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a couple of years ago I think the member from Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland, he organized a soccer game against the Special Olympics team. And I can't go into the details now but suffice to say if anybody wants more information they can talk to the member from Melfort and he'd let them know that we soon found out how good the Special Olympics athletes are. We look forward to hearing of the many accomplishments of these athletes and that they will continue to have in their athletic careers.

Mr. Speaker, also here with us today we have Darlene MacQuarrie. Darlene was in Austria for the 2017 World Winter Games serving as the floor hockey team manager. Thank you, Darlene, for your amazing commitment and contribution to Special Olympics in our province and to the success of these Saskatchewan athletes.

To all the athletes and coaches, thank you for your commitment to sport and serving as role models in our communities throughout the province. You have made Saskatchewan very, very proud. I ask, Mr. Speaker, that all members join with me in congratulating and welcoming these very special guests to our Legislative Assembly and to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With leave to make a not quite as extensive introduction in response.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And certainly I just want to lend the voice of the official . . . on behalf of the official opposition, a voice of welcome and a voice of congratulations to this 2017 Special Olympics winter team.

Mr. Speaker, I'm informed by the Leader of the Opposition that he's got some personal experience with the Haddad boys and knows what the Haddad line can produce when they're out there playing. And, Mr. Speaker, it's just really great to see these people here at their Legislative Assembly today.

The pride and the medals, the representation of Saskatchewan around the world, is something that you should be very proud of, and you should know that we're very proud of all of you in terms of the players, the teachers, and the support staff.

So again I just say on behalf of the official opposition, welcome to your Legislative Assembly, thank you very much, and congratulations.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the risk of not wanting to ask for an extended introduction, I will be as quick as I can.

Mr. Speaker, in your gallery today is CJ Katz who is well known to the Assembly both as the culinary host of the Wheatland Café on CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.], which is in its 10th season, nearly 40 episodes per year. She's a senior judge for Gold Medal Plates.

She is also well known as being the candidate for the Saskatchewan Party for Regina Douglas Park. I understand she's seriously contemplating running again, and I'm not wanting to single out anybody in particular, but I urge somebody to work very hard.

And, Mr. Speaker, she is also joined in the gallery today by her son, Aidan Katz, who works in our office, as well as his girlfriend, Maggie Omer-Canitz, and would ask that all members join me in welcoming them to their Assembly today.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the Deputy Premier in welcoming CJ Katz and her family to the Legislative Assembly. I had the opportunity to meet CJ, as was already mentioned, a few times on the campaign trail, and it's always great to see her and see where her career is taking her. Congratulations on your 10th-year anniversary. You're providing some amazing culinary inspiration for all of us in Saskatchewan. I, in particular, am not very good in that department so it's always nice to see what you're capable of making as opposed to what I'm capable of making.

In any event, it's a pleasure to see you and your family here and I'd ask that all members join me in welcoming 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 point out that the government seems to have no sense of what spiritual care actually provided in our health facilities, otherwise they would not have cut it. They don't seem to have a strong understanding of that role played in our health system, Mr. Speaker.

The petitioners point out, in this last budget the Sask Party eliminated funding for spiritual care, which provided spiritual care services within our health facilities. They point out that Saskatchewan will be the only province, Mr. Speaker, within Canada to not fund this support for patients, residents, and their families seeking wellness. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners point out the Sask Party hid their plan to cut spiritual care funding during the 2016 election, Mr. Speaker, just over a year ago.

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. The petitioners point out that spiritual care supports families, patients, and residents in making difficult decisions. And in fact I've heard from many health care professionals who say that they're an important part of the team for supporting them in difficult times as well. The petitioners point out that spiritual care can provide for 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 pastoral care services in this province's health region facilities.

Mr. Speaker, this petition 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 the 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 Shellbrook, Leask, Canwood, Big River. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition here today as it refers to adding passing lanes on Highway 7 west of Rosetown to the Alberta border. The prayer reads as follows:

Whereas Highway 7 from the Alberta border to Rosetown serves as a major industrial and commercial corridor between Calgary and Saskatoon and also serves as a major connecting highway between communities for education and medical purposes, as well as serving families who live and travel rurally;

And whereas, as a result, traffic volumes on this section of highway continue to grow — 2015 Ministry of Highways stats show average annual daily traffic counts are reaching as much as 4,090 on portions of this highway;

And whereas the communities, industries, and farms along this corridor have contributed financially through taxes to the province;

And whereas the current single-lane highway is a traffic safety hazard, as SGI stats show that between 2011 and 2015, along Highway 7 from Alsask to Rosetown, there were a total of 403 collisions resulting in 100 injuries and 14 deaths, not to mention thousands of dollars in insurance claims;

So therefore the prayer reads as follows:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take immediate action to add passing lanes along Highway 7 west of Rosetown to the Alberta border.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition are from Dinsmore, from Eston, and Kindersley. And I so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm rising on behalf of my colleague from Prince Albert Northcote who has other petitions to present as well, but she's been calling on anyone to help out, anyone in this Assembly to help out and get support for a second bridge in Prince Albert.

So the people who have signed the petition would like to bring to our attention the following: the Diefenbaker bridge in Prince Albert is the primary link that connects the southern part of the province to the North. With no other crossing, heavy truck traffic must be rerouted, adding a significant amount of cost for the businesses in and around Prince Albert in terms of losses or added expenses. The current residents, businesses, and tourists in Prince Albert and northern communities require safe and efficient transportation infrastructure that includes adequate bridges.

The Sask Party government refuses to stand up for Prince Albert in this critical infrastructure issue, and local municipal governments have limited resources and require a second bridge to be funded through federal and provincial governments and not through a P3 [public-private partnership] model, Mr. Speaker. The support of the people and municipal governments

of Prince Albert and neighbouring communities for a second bridge is overwhelming and has been joined by support from industry groups, the Saskatchewan association of regional municipalities, and many others across the province, and the need for a second bridge for Prince Albert has never been clearer than it is today. Prince Albert, communities north of Prince Albert, and businesses that send people and products through Prince Albert require a solution.

I'll read the prayer:

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

Now, Mr. Speaker, the people who are signing the petition today come from the community of Prince Albert. 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 concerning pay equity here in Saskatchewan. And the undersigned residents of the province want to bring to our attention the following: that the citizens of Saskatchewan believe in an economy powered by transparency, accountability, security, and equity; and that all women should be paid equitably; and we know that women are powerful drivers of economic growth and their economic empowerment benefits us all.

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 that a man makes. According to the most recent StatsCan data, the national gender wage gap for full-time workers is 72 cents for every dollar that a man makes:

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; and that we provide a framework under which this can be done within this term of the Assembly; and that the Saskatchewan government call upon workplaces within Saskatchewan, within the private sector, to eliminate the wage gap between women and men.

[14:00]

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 to

Prince Albert mobile crisis. Prince Albert mobile crisis unit has had to close its door during daytime hours, resulting in a loss of resource to people in distress. They've had to make that decision because of a cut of funding, Mr. Speaker. And we know that crisis services are required on a 24-hours basis.

And, Mr. Speaker, because this week is Mental Health Week, I think it's important to talk about the role mobile crisis plays with supporting individuals with mental health concerns. The crisis intervention team, they are able to recognize mental health disorders, Mr. Speaker, and they're also able to coordinate services for individuals struggling with mental health issues. And very importantly, they're trained to implement the suicide risk assessments, Mr. Speaker, so they're able to assess individuals who may be having thoughts of suicide and provide them the services that they need at that time. And so this is a critical service that needs to be implemented, and a 24-hour emergency service is needed in our third-largest city, in Prince Albert.

The daytime closure of Prince Albert mobile has put stress on Prince Albert Police Service, Victoria Hospital staff, and other agencies who may not be trained and/or qualified to provide the counselling and intervention services to clients. I'll read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, individuals across this province are concerned about the lack of support with crisis service in Prince Albert, and this particular petition was signed by individuals from Prince Albert and Big River. I do so present.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition regarding Bill 63. Those who have signed this petition wish to draw our attention to the following: that they are opposed to the changing of *The Education Act* of Bill 63 as it currently reads until the government takes part in active and good faith, transparent conversation with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

They're asking that there be transparency and consultation before any changes are made to *The Education Act*. They're also noting that it's imperative that the government recognizes that there must be an appropriate time frame in which the elected board members are able to convey all information of decisions affecting their communities. Mr. Speaker, with \$54 million in cuts being exacted from the education sector, there will be many decisions to discuss.

And they also wish to draw our attention to this, that they wish the Government of Saskatchewan would recognize that local school boards are the voice of Saskatchewan communities, and decisions should remain with such elected boards. I'll read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, these petitions have been signed by citizens all across the province. The particular pages I present today have been signed by those living in Weyburn. I do so present.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition to ensure job security for victims of domestic violence. Saskatchewan has the very 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 domestic violence, and for many of them, Mr. Speaker, the violence follows them to their workplace. Employers lose \$77.9 million annually due to the direct and indirect impacts of domestic violence.

Manitoba's already enacted legislation similar to the private member's bill we tabled, Mr. Speaker, and Ontario is on its way to enacting legislation to ensure 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. 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 institutions. And, Mr. Speaker, you and the other members may have seen people demonstrating from the Students Mobilizing Against Cuts group outside. They are among many in the province who are very concerned about the cuts in this budget to the post-secondary education sector, with colleges and universities losing over 5 per cent of their budgets. This is a cut, Mr. Speaker, that we have already seen result in job losses. It will likely result in increased costs, and it is compounded by the elimination of the tax credit for tuition and books — all of which are things that will make education more difficult to access and less affordable for Saskatchewan students. 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 petition today is signed by individuals from Regina. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Missing Persons Week

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, this week marks Missing Persons Week in our province. The week is an opportunity to increase public awareness and encourage people to bring forward any information that could help our police services find missing people throughout Saskatchewan.

It is also a week to demonstrate community support to the grieving families and friends that are left with no answers when a loved one disappears. That is why this year's theme is Because You're Not Here, a campaign that encourages anyone impacted by the issue of missing persons to share their personal stories by completing the sentence, "Because you're not here . . ."

Mr. Speaker, currently there are 125 long-term missing persons in our province. And although awareness weeks like this are a step in the right direction, so much more needs to be done. Saskatchewan is still facing an epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous people caused by systemic social and economic disparity and lack of government resources for rural and remote indigenous communities in our province.

Truly, Mr. Speaker, of those most significant ways this government could make a difference is to stop the talk and finally follow through on implementing the Truth and Reconciliation report's call to action. So, Mr. Speaker, I call on all members to join me today in recognition of Missing Persons Week, in thanking our police services for all they do to find missing peoples and supporting grieving families, and in acknowledging all the work that still needs to be done. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Provincial Secretary.

Missing Children's Month

Hon. Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House to note that May 2017 has been proclaimed as Missing Children's Month. Missing Children's Month is an important opportunity to raise awareness on behalf of missing children and their families. Every year, we hear of Saskatchewan children going missing, as well as we see the impact this has on family, friends, and community.

This year marks Child Find Saskatchewan's 26th annual Green Ribbon of Hope Campaign, which runs the month of May. Child Find Saskatchewan works to protect the rights of children and youth, as well as those who cannot speak. Green ribbons may be obtained by contacting Child Find Saskatchewan. We value the role that Child Find Saskatchewan plays in assisting law enforcement agencies and other partners to locate missing children and educate children and adults about being safe.

I am proud to note in March our government provided 50,000 in funding to Child Find Saskatchewan. This is truly a testament of hope for the missing. And if you are hearing my words,

please do not give up, as we will continue to search for you. And as Child Find Saskatchewan says, a missing child is everyone's responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members join me in recognizing May as Missing Children's Month and ask that we all do our part in bringing awareness to this important issue. Thank you.

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

2017 Regina Police Service Half Marathon

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today, although a little bit slowly, to recognize the 2017 Regina Police Service Half Marathon which took place Sunday, April the 30th. I was happy to participate in the annual half marathon relay, along with the Leader of the Opposition and the member, my colleague, from Regina Douglas Park.

Mr. Speaker, the RPS [Regina Police Service] Half Marathon is an initiative of the Regina Police wellness program, and it began in 2004 in an effort to promote healthy lifestyles for both members of the police service and the community. And to this day, the event continues to grow and attract both new and experienced runners. I want to recognize the winner of the half marathon, Adam Strueby, as well as all of the participants who took part in the half marathon, three-person half marathon relay, or the five-kilometre run and walk.

Mr. Speaker, volunteers are what make events like the RPS Half Marathon a success, and I know I appreciated their support every step of the way. Whether it was words of encouragement or a cold drink, their efforts were outstanding.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there was a little bit of a friendly wager on the line here, and our team went up against the members from Regina University, Wood River, and Saskatoon Sutherland. And they gave it a good try, Mr. Speaker. But the real winners at the end of the day were the Regina Transition House, and there'll be a donation directed to them. And so it was all in good fun.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to recognize our new police chief, Mr. Evan Bray, who completed his first half marathon. I'd also like to thank the Regina Police Service, all the event sponsors, as well as the volunteers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mental Health Week

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, May 1st to May 7th has been proclaimed as Mental Health Week. Mr. Speaker, we know that one in five people in Saskatchewan are directly affected by mental health issues. But we also know that indirectly it affects many more, including, Mr. Speaker, in this Chamber. We too are all affected in some way by mental health issues.

Mr. Speaker, while progress has been made in recent years when it comes to mental health care, we can do more and we will do more. Work in our government is ongoing to address the

recommendations in the mental health and addictions action plan. In 2016-17, more than 35 recommendations and recommended actions were being addressed by the Ministry of Health and partner ministries.

Our government was also pleased to sign a health care agreement with the federal government that will see Saskatchewan receive \$150 million for mental health care over the next 10 years. This funding is significant and every dollar will be put towards programs to improve mental health care in every corner of this province.

We will also be celebrating a construction milestone at the new Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford on Friday, May the 5th. Sask Hospital North Battleford is now 50 per cent complete, is on budget, and is on track to be completed in 2018. And that completion date has been a long-awaited day in the Battlefords.

During this important week, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind my colleagues that we all have a responsibility to raise awareness of mental health illness and to work to reduce the discrimination and stigma associated with mental health. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure.

Saskatchewan Athlete Named to Badminton Canada Team

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I stand proud to recognize an exceptional athlete in my constituency, Wyatt Lightfoot. When Wyatt was just three months old, he was diagnosed with a type of dwarfism.

Mr. Speaker, Wyatt was a very active and healthy child despite his diagnosis, with a love of sports that developed early on in his life. Mr. Speaker, being unable to play contact sports has not hurt Wyatt's competitive spirit. In 2013, along with 400 athletes from around the world, he was one of 25 Canadians to participate in the World Dwarf Games, taking home 10 medals, Mr. Speaker.

Wyatt learned that badminton will now be an event in the 2020 Paralympics in Tokyo. Mr. Speaker, Wyatt shifted his focus and was recently named a member of the first-ever Badminton Canada team. Recently, Wyatt took home gold in the para national badminton tournament in Moncton, New Brunswick.

This road to Tokyo is looking very bright for Wyatt as, this year, he is already scheduled to travel to Ireland and South Korea. And, Mr. Speaker, did I mention that Wyatt Lightfoot is only 13 years old?

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating Wyatt Lightfoot on his success with the Badminton Canada team and wish him all the best on his quest to represent Canada at the 2020 Paralympic Games. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Post-Secondary Graduates Find Success in Saskatchewan

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to share some good news about post-secondary graduates throughout the province. The recently completed Saskatchewan graduate outcome survey illustrates that post-secondary education continues to lead to positive outcomes for students. Not only do the majority of students see significant benefits from the programs, they are also staying right here in this province. More than 90 per cent of respondents say that they are satisfied with the quality of their educational experience.

[14:15]

Mr. Speaker, the survey also indicated that 85 per cent of 2014 graduates are employed, with two-thirds working in jobs related to their program of study, and their salaries have increased faster than the rate of inflation.

I am proud of this government's record when it comes to post-secondary education and doing right by our students. The survey reported that two-thirds of graduates were satisfied with provincial government programs and services related to post-secondary education and training, and student debt has remained relatively unchanged compared to 2009-10 graduates.

Mr. Speaker, our post-secondary graduates continue to find success in Saskatchewan. With 90 per cent of the respondents still living in Saskatchewan after graduation, it's clear that our province continues to be a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

I ask all members to join me in celebrating the success of our post-secondary sector and commend our institutions for supporting our learners. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Premier's Dinner and Behaviour of Protestors

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday the Saskatchewan Party held another very successful Premier's Dinner in Saskatoon. Over a thousand attendees heard our Premier outline our government's vision for Saskatchewan's bright future.

There were also some people who decided to protest the dinner. Mr. Speaker, those individuals have every right to hold a peaceful protest, but they do not have the right to obstruct those who wanted to attend our Premier's speech. They do not have the right to block traffic, to hit cars, to jump on people's hoods. But that's exactly what some of them did. Mr. Speaker, this was absolutely unacceptable behaviour.

And what has the NDP said about it? Well they appear to be encouraging it or at least condoning it. If you go to the Saskatoon metro NDP Facebook page, there are numerous pictures of protesters obstructing cars and numerous statements from the NDP encouraging this outrageous behaviour. There's even pictures of the member from Saskatoon Nutana taking part in the protest.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP encouraging this outrageous behaviour? And what does the NDP's interim leader have to say about it? At the very least, will he have the intestinal fortitude to say that blocking traffic and hitting cars is unacceptable? And will he order the Saskatoon metro NDP to take down their posts encouraging this outrageous behaviour? I'm doubtful, Mr. Speaker, but we're about to find out.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

SaskTel and Intent of Bill 40

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible, or so-called responsible for SaskTel was unequivocal on Wednesday night when he said that SaskTel had not looked into tax implications of a sell-off. But then on Thursday, only after the Sask Party had rushed Royal Assent on their privatization bill, the minister wrote to admit that when he said “no,” and then “no, no,” what he really meant was yes, yes, yes, Mr. Speaker. There has been some preliminary work done by SaskTel on this front. It's beyond belief from the Sask Party that has no decency and no mandate on this front.

Mr. Speaker, when was the Premier made aware that the truth did not match what the minister said on Wednesday?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Once again, Mr. Speaker, I would say that this is more than a reasonable and fair question on the part of the Leader of the Opposition to ask. What I would again ask him respectfully not to do is impugn the motives of either the minister or members on this side, calling into question the decency, perhaps, of the minister in this respect. I don't think that advances the debate.

Mr. Speaker, my understanding is this: that the answer that the minister gave in committee was exactly as he believed to be the case, Mr. Speaker. And immediately upon revisiting the situation and information that had been provided to the minister's office, he sent out a note to the critic clarifying the matter, correcting the matter, as I would expect we would all want him to do, and as I expect all of us would do, Mr. Speaker.

The rushed Royal Assent involved three different bills; it's happened before in this session, Mr. Speaker. And so this all doesn't quite fit together in the conspiratorial ways perhaps that the interim leader of the NDP would choose. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate that certainly I support the minister's efforts in this respect to clarify the record and clear up the matter the very first order of business the next day, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Saskatchewan is being more than a bit precious here. Mr. Speaker, he said to Saskatchewan people in the last election that he would not privatize our Crown corporations. Of course, a broken promise and a betrayal to Saskatchewan people, and not the decency or the backbone from that Premier to let Saskatchewan people have a vote, Mr. Speaker.

Last week the Minister of Justice said, “. . . once there's a transaction, if there ever was one, a full analysis of that would take place, including what options would be available on the tax side.” “But until there is a transaction in front of us, we can't do that analysis.”

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: what other secrets and schemes is the Premier keeping from his cabinet? What else is the Sask Party hiding from Saskatchewan people?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well in terms of correcting the preamble, I want to say to the members opposite that as a result of Bill 40, these Crown corporations listed in legislation in the province of Saskatchewan cannot be privatized. That is entirely the point of the legislation. Well, Mr. Speaker, they laugh, but that is exactly the intent of the legislation. They now will be in perpetuity in majority control by the people of the province of Saskatchewan and the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, and as to the member's direct question, I can share with him and members of the House that there is no deal, and what the Justice minister said is exactly correct. It's also consistent with what the Minister for SaskTel has said, is that if there ever is, if there ever is a detailed offer put before SaskTel or the government with respect to any Crowns, Mr. Speaker, before any decision is taken, the material information to that deal will be released to the public, Mr. Speaker. What the Minister of Justice said is absolutely true, Mr. Speaker. The bottom line is there is no deal before any of the Crowns at this time.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, that's the kind of doublespeak that's making it so difficult for the people of Saskatchewan to trust that Sask Party government. So I'll ask the Minister Responsible for SaskTel a very simple question: when did he learn that he was wrong when he said no, no, no work had been done?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources and SaskTel.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member will know that we had a very short break in between when SaskTel estimates were under consideration and SaskEnergy. I had a very brief conversation that evening with the CEO. I called him the next morning to confirm that in fact that my answer was incorrect, and I instructed my staff at that time to draft a letter for the member opposite.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Again, Mr. Speaker, if that's the case, then the first opportunity would have been first thing the next morning, and we would have had that information in front of this House before Royal Assent and before question period, Mr. Speaker — not at a quarter to two, after question period.

I guess I'm wondering this: his chief of staff was in the room

when the committee sat in this Chamber, and on Thursday we learned that his chief of staff was also in the room and held the meeting with the telecommunication company. But we didn't learn that from the letter to the minister. We learned that through the media.

When I asked who was in that meeting, the minister said, "Well I'm not sure what the prior discussion was. I wasn't part of that meeting." Mr. Speaker, I asked who the discussion was with, and all the minister could say was, "Well it wasn't with myself, so I'm . . ." Mr. Speaker, the meeting was with his chief of staff, in his office. Mr. Speaker, since it clearly was not, since it clearly was not, why did the minister characterize his meeting as some kind of a chance encounter?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources and SaskTel.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Again, Mr. Speaker, I think I spoke to this Friday when I scrummed with the media. And I said to the media, and I think the member opposite heard my comments, that I should've answered the question that the member asked that evening in committee. I have a great deal of respect for him and if I had to do it over again, I would've answered differently.

My staff did meet with a company that has operations in Saskatchewan to learn more about that company. It was an introductory meeting. I don't think it was unusual for meetings that have taken place when the members opposite were the former government, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, these types of meetings happen from time to time between government officials, including members of a minister's staff, Mr. Speaker. And so I clarified that on Friday, Mr. Speaker, and I think I addressed it at that time.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, we've got two issues with what this minister's related in committee and then again to the public. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, the minister said that work was not being done to investigate a sale, and it was. The minister said he didn't have an official meeting, but he did. He spoke to them in his own office after they had met with his chief of staff, Mr. Speaker. So did the minister miss that first meeting because he didn't want to know, or was he kept out because he's being kept out of the loop?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources and SaskTel.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I think the member will know — I believe he was a minister of the Crown at one time — a minister has a variety of responsibilities, Mr. Speaker, as a minister, as an MLA, as a member of this House, and the duties within this House, Mr. Speaker.

So I do not attend every single meeting that is put in the calendar of members of my staff, Mr. Speaker. But I try to keep up to date on all of my files as best as I can, Mr. Speaker. In the case that the member opposite has raised, and I agree, Mr. Speaker, that there were things that I needed to correct based on the committee meeting. I did so in writing on the first point, and I believe I did in a public fashion, in front of the media, in terms

of how I handled the second part of the member's concern. So I believe that I've covered both of these points.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice needs to answer for his defence of Bill 40 as well. He repeated, time and time again, that there was no deal on the table: "We haven't had any discussions with any tax advisers with respect to what any particular transaction might look like." Mr. Speaker, who is the "we" he was talking about? And is he saying that he, the Justice minister, the minister tasked with pushing through the privatization bill, the minister who is asked to lead a committee to review sketchy deals, is he saying that he was kept in the dark? Or was he keeping the Saskatchewan people in the dark?

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I answered that question in committee, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't aware . . . I'm not aware of any ongoing discussions with respect to any tax advice or anything, Mr. Speaker. The way I answered that question, Mr. Speaker, in committee, was simply this, Mr. Speaker: any particular transaction can take . . . Any particular transaction, Mr. Speaker, could take any one of a number of forms, Mr. Speaker. And to analyze any particular agreement or any particular suggestion in terms of an agreement, Mr. Speaker, would be an impossible task, Mr. Speaker.

When there is an offer on the table, Mr. Speaker, or when there is a suggestion with respect to an agreement, Mr. Speaker, a full analysis can be done at that agreement, not only with respect to the tax consequences, Mr. Speaker, but the effect of that transaction with respect to return on equity, jobs, all the matters which we've already spoken about, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, we're talking about the privatization of our Crown corporations and a plan, a scheme of SaskTel, Mr. Speaker. We have a minister before this legislature, in a committee, saying no, no, no. He's clarified on the floor of this Assembly that in fact he learned that very night that he was wrong, that that wasn't true. Yet the Sask Party and that Premier rushed Royal Assent, brought the Queen's representative, the Lieutenant Governor, into the Assembly the next day to pass that bill for Royal Assent instead of coming clean with Saskatchewan people.

How can this Premier stand by a minister who knew he wasn't straight in committee and didn't take the earliest opportunity to be straight with the people of this Assembly and all the people of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy, Resources and SaskTel.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again when I had a very brief discussion between the short break from SaskTel estimates to SaskEnergy estimates,

knowing that the work of the committee had to continue on, that there potentially was a problem with my answer, I then phoned the CEO [chief executive officer] the following morning to get his views on the matter, Mr. Speaker. At that point, it was clear that I was incorrect.

I asked my staff to draft a letter. That letter went back to SaskTel to confirm that they were okay with the way that the letter was being drafted. We printed it off. I signed the letter. I think I signed two copies of the letter, and we sent it over to the members opposite the following day. So if the member . . . I guess I'm having a little bit of trouble understanding, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry that it wasn't at 10 o'clock in the morning, Mr. Speaker. It was the following day, though. I made an error. It was my error. I take responsibility for it, and I corrected it the next day.

[14:30]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, that answer is totally unacceptable. This is a minister of the Crown responsible for SaskTel, who realized that what he shared with this Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan wasn't true. He learned that the night before; he confirmed it the next day, Mr. Speaker.

Did the Sask Party, at that point in time, and this Premier, did he afford the decency to Saskatchewan people and this Assembly of coming clean, that what was said the night before wasn't true? No, Mr. Speaker, what he did was he rammed forward, brought in the Queen's representative, and passed the bill for Royal Assent. It's the kind of nonsense that we see day after day with the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] scandal that gave away millions of dollars, that ripped off nuns and taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, a scandal for which this government still hasn't come clean.

My question's back to the Premier. It's pretty straightforward. The minister has said that he found out he knew that what he shared with the committee was untrue. Why, as Premier of Saskatchewan, did he not have the decency to ensure that Saskatchewan people had that information before Royal Assent was given to that bill?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, asked and answered by the minister. It was the very next day that the clarification happened to the member, directly to the member that asked the question. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, there was a discussion also with the media as well, Mr. Speaker, so I just categorically reject how the member opposite has characterized this question.

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

Government's Fiscal Management

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, we know and the Premier knows that it was the Sask Party who, in terms of the GTH, agreed to the CP [Canadian Pacific] land deal two years after they formed government — two years, Mr. Speaker. They have no one to

blame but themselves. It was the Sask Party's bad decision back in 2009 to give land, more land, away to their corporate buddies.

And rather than learning from those mistakes, the Sask Party just keeps plowing ahead with more bad decisions. For example, spiritual care aids look after the sick and dying in our hospitals, but they weren't spared the Sask Party's axe. Their cuts to funeral services will force the poorest of the poor to miss out on the dignity of a funeral or a final viewing.

The Sask Party gave away millions to massive corporations, but they want us to believe that we can't afford to look after each other anymore. How can the Finance minister justify pouring billions into his mismanagement, scandal, and waste while cutting the dignity out from under the most vulnerable? Will he reverse these cuts?

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

Hon. Ms. Baudry-Mellor: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, as you know, this budget included the largest social services budget in our history. The key driver of that budget was utilization pressure. Mr. Speaker, to continue to make sure that we keep pace with meeting the needs of vulnerable people that we serve, the income assistance area of our budget increased by 13 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

However with a \$1.2 billion drop in revenue over the last three years, Mr. Speaker, it did mean we had to look at some of the extras we provide in our ministry so we could focus our resources on keeping the lights on, food on the table, and roofs over people's heads, Mr. Speaker. To this end, Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to cover burials and cremation services for those who are low income with a flat rate of \$2,100, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, the Social Services minister can defend all she wants, but there's no denying that the Finance minister's budget is Robin Hood in reverse, robbing the most vulnerable of their dignity and making it rain cash and free land on corporations and the wealthy and well-connected. Mr. Speaker, corporations get a \$60 million tax cut, but the PST [provincial sales tax] bill that they're hiding from scrutiny will hike taxes by \$1 billion.

Mr. Speaker, they're going after our towns and cities too. They're ripping up decades-old agreements with municipalities just because they want to. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party is forcing municipalities to raise taxes, cut services, and drain the reserves.

The Sask Party used to say that they valued their municipal partners, but now the only values the Sask Party sees are dollar signs. Mr. Speaker, they'll throw anyone under the bus to shift the blame and responsibility for their mismanagement, their waste, and their scandal and put it onto somebody else.

What does the Finance minister have to say to the victims of his latest round of scapegoating our municipalities?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's become abundantly clear in this Chamber over the last number of weeks since the budget was brought down, the position of the NDP on a variety of issues, Mr. Speaker.

They don't like the tax changes that have been brought in by this government. When we're dealing with a \$1.2 billion resource revenue drop-off over the course of the last three years, Mr. Speaker, that's just a fact. The Finance critic acknowledged that last fall with respect to the downturn in the commodities sector in this province, Mr. Speaker.

So this government had a choice. We can continue to kick the can down the street and not deal with the deficit like they're doing in NDP Alberta, Mr. Speaker — \$72 billion in debt by the end of that term of that government, the NDP government in Alberta, by the end of their term, Mr. Speaker.

We're not prepared to do that here in this province. We have taken the income tax, Mr. Speaker, moving taxes on productivity and income over to a consumption-based tax, Mr. Speaker, to deal with that kind of volatility in our resource revenue sector to ensure we have the resources, to have the largest budget in the history of this province in social services, Mr. Speaker, to have record infrastructure spending in this province, to have investments in our health care system, in our education system, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're going to continue to do.

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

Role of School Boards and Intent of Bill 63

Ms. Beck: — Almost as bad as the Education minister's condescending and arrogant tone. And nothing anyone on that side says matches up with the hundreds of letters that I've received in my office from parents and teachers who are worried about the cuts that this government is making to our kids' classrooms.

Mr. Speaker, what makes the minister feel entitled to take the decision-making powers away from locally elected trustees and give them fully to himself? Why is he going against the will of Saskatchewan people 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 Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, when we talk about Bill 63, we give examples. School divisions that are paying for more than one director at the same time. It's happening in two different school divisions right now. Mr. Speaker, it also happened in 2005. Education minister Andrew Thomson was asked in committee why Davidson school division was paying a salary, a pension, and a gratuity to the same director of education at the same time. Mr. Speaker, the minister's response was, and I quote, "*The Education Act* does not provide any ability for the minister to intervene in individual decisions made by individual boards." That was then minister of

Education Andrew Thomson, May 10th, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, in 2005 when the NDP were faced with bad behaviour from a division, they did nothing about it. Mr. Speaker, we're not going to do that.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, that is the minister who time and time again refuses to take any responsibility for the damaging cuts his government is making in our kids' classrooms. This is a government that provided a \$60 million corporate tax giveaway while that minister wants to cut \$60 million out of our kids' classrooms. He wants to play divide and conquer. Of course I support publicly funded education, Mr. Speaker, and of course that includes both the Catholic and the public system.

That minister needs to stop spreading division, and that minister needs to stop attacking democratically elected school board trustees, parents, teachers, and everyone in the system, and start supporting Saskatchewan education. Mr. Speaker, parents and teachers have been very clear: they did not want to lose their local voice in education. So will the minister finally take some responsibility for his own bad decisions and scrap Bill 63?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite talk about responsibility. The responsibility that they didn't take in 2005, we're taking this year, Mr. Speaker. We will pass Bill 63. We will prevent school boards from paying two directors at the same time. We will set bussing limits so that we've got cost controls, Mr. Speaker. We want our resources spent in the classroom, not in the courtroom, not in the boardroom. We want our money to go to students, not to courtroom battles, Mr. Speaker. That's the direction that we're going.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite better sit down and take a careful look at what her position is on some of these things because there's a lot of people are starting to pay a lot of attention to the issues that they've got before the House right now, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on April 27th, the member opposite said this: "I do not think it appropriate that I would call that court decision into question," Mr. Speaker. Then she said, "We are encouraged by the Catholic school board . . . [inaudible] . . . decision to appeal the decision." Where are they, Mr. Speaker?

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

Support for Municipalities

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, the only thing worse than the Sask Party cuts are the ways they're tying the hands of our cities, towns, and villages from standing up for the Saskatchewan people and themselves. The Government Relations minister says, no one has concerns.

Well, Mr. Speaker, SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] couldn't be much more clear. The Sask Party's legislation cancels all contracts for

payments-in-lieu to 109 hometowns, allows the province to redirect millions to themselves instead, and prevents towns and cities from defending these contracts in court. Mr. Speaker, SUMA remains deeply concerned about what is being lost through Bill 64 and about what seems to be an intentional lack of clarity from the minister. Is the minister intentionally confusing the issue, or does she actually not understand this drastic cut?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, it is the member opposite and actually in some of SUMA's communication that's confusing the issue. There is not 109 contracts; 109 contracts do not exist. There is nine contracts with SaskEnergy and 10 with SaskPower.

In fact, the city of Saskatoon does not have a contract for grants-in-lieu for SaskPower. It was a letter of intent. That's it. There is no contract there. For the city of North Battleford, it's a board minute. It's a board decision. So all together between both Crowns, there's 19 contracts. Most of them have language around termination. So, Mr. Speaker, when they keep saying there's 109 contracts, that's simply not true.

As far as clarification, I have an email from the executive director for SUMA. And it says, and I quote:

The minister's letter is very clear and most helpful for our members to gain a better understanding of the impact the budget announcements will have on their operations. The level of detail and clarity in this letter is exactly what we're looking for, and our minister hit the mark.

That's SUMA, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — It's the Sask Party government that blew through an economic boom, and now they're making municipalities and Saskatchewan people pay for the Sask Party's mismanagement, scandal, and waste.

Mr. Speaker, that Sask Party is using their own current budget shortfalls to permanently take these revenues from cities, towns, and villages. The provincial government clearly made cuts in this budget that they don't fully understand.

Will the minister start listening to municipalities and scrap Bill 64?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — It's ironic, Mr. Speaker, that that member opposite talks about how we blew through the money. Do you know who got more money and increases year over year over year for eight years? Municipalities, Mr. Speaker. Municipalities had no clue under the members opposite what their funding would be from year to year.

Mr. Speaker, for eight consecutive years we have increased funding to municipalities, not just in revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker, but in infrastructure funding. We have given funding for a stadium here in Regina, for bridges in Saskatoon, and the list goes on and on and on and on.

So that member opposite, to stand up when she represents a party that, when in government, there was tax revolts around this province, that is just too special and I will not be taking any, any direction from her whatsoever.

[14:45]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 70 — *The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2017*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 70, *The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2017* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 70, *The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2017* be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In order to facilitate the work of committees this afternoon, I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — It has been moved that this Assembly do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This Assembly now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 14:46.]

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President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

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Minister of Social Services
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
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Government Insurance
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