



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

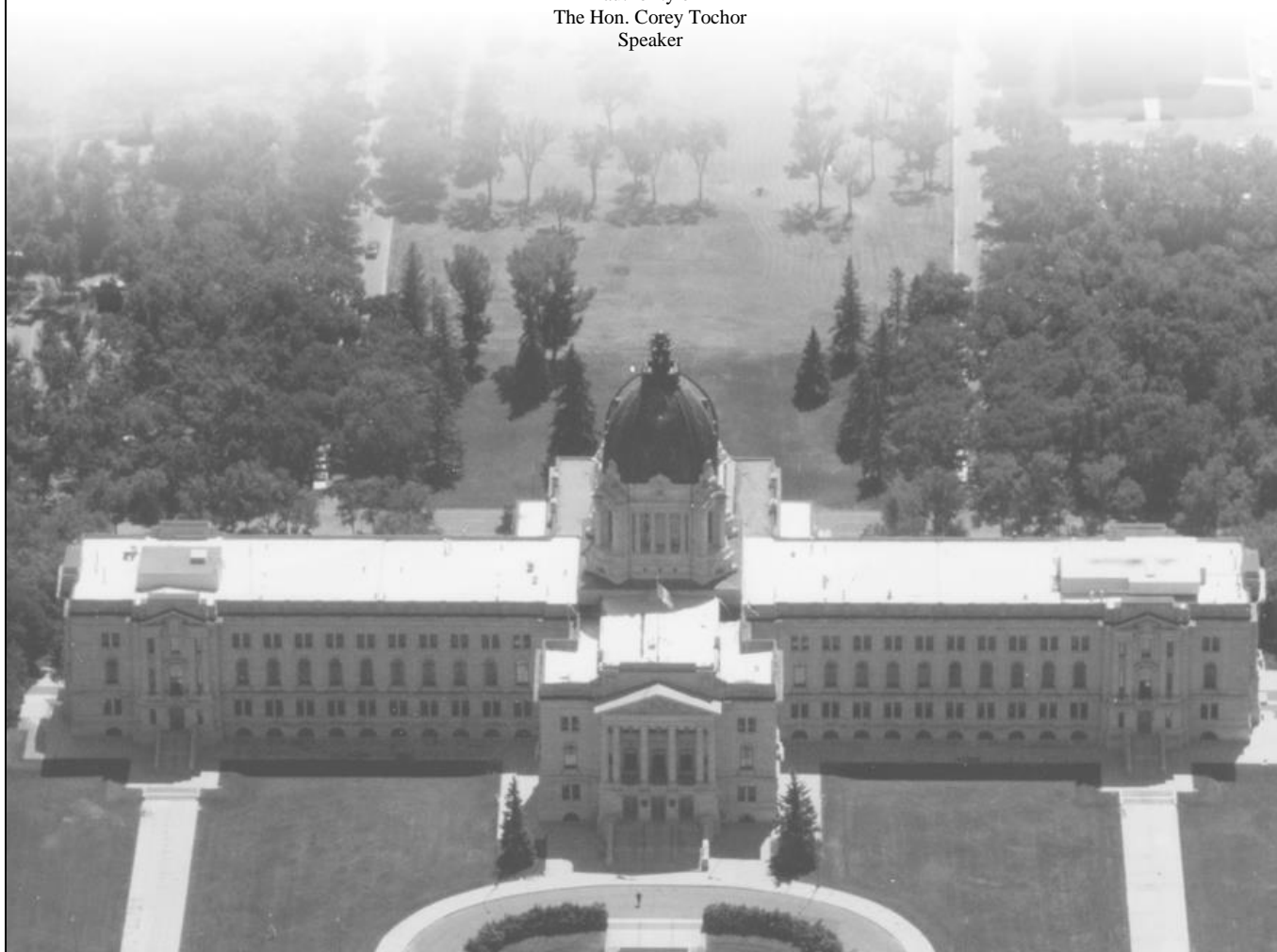
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
authority of  
The Hon. Corey Tochor  
Speaker



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

**Speaker** — Hon. Corey Tochor

**Premier** — Hon. Brad Wall

**Leader of the Opposition** — Trent Wotherspoon

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

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

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

**Bonk**, Steven — Moosomin (SP)

**Boyd**, Bill — Kindersley (SP)

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

**Brkich**, Greg — Arm River (SP)

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

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

**Carr**, Lori — Estevan (SP)

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

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

**Cox**, Herb — The Battlefords (SP)

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

**Dennis**, Terry — Canora-Pelly (SP)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Kirsch**, Delbert — Batoche (SP)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Phillips**, Kevin — Melfort (SP)

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

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

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

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

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

**Steele**, Doug — Cypress Hills (SP)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Clerks-at-the-Table**

**Clerk** — Gregory A. Putz

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

**Principal Clerk** — Iris Lang

**Clerk Assistant** — Kathy Burianyak

**Sergeant-at-Arms** — Terry Quinn

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

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

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Request leave to make a personal statement, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

#### STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

##### Correction Regarding a Member's Statement

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I delivered a member's statement highlighting the unveiling of a statue honouring missing and murdered indigenous women in Saskatoon. I incorrectly stated that the sculpture was inspired by Carol Wolfe's daughter, Karina, who went missing over six years ago when it was in fact inspired by another murdered indigenous woman, Amber Redman, who was tragically taken in 2005. I want to apologize to the families of Amber and Karina for my mistake.

Mr. Speaker, I want to assure you that our government and I share your concerns about the need to better address issues related to missing and murdered indigenous women. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

##### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave of the House for an extended introduction.

**The Speaker:** — Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues, for the leave. It's an honour to be able to introduce some special guests that have joined us in your gallery today. Mr. Speaker, today is the Regina Bypass Design Builders' Safety Day, Mr. Speaker, and they're marking part of that day here at the legislature with recognition as a result, I hope in part, of this introduction to the House.

Mr. Speaker, I can inform the Assembly and members of the Assembly that for them to mark this day is very much appropriate, considering that throughout the life of this project, the largest infrastructure project in the province's history,

throughout the 2 million hours there have been no accidents, Mr. Speaker. And this is a remarkable achievement, given again the scale of the project and the hundreds of people that have been involved.

So, Mr. Speaker, in no particular order I'm going to introduce the companies and the representatives that have joined us today. And maybe they could give us a bit of a wave as they do. But while they're waving they can accept our appreciation for the leadership that's been shown by Saskatchewan companies on this project and the leadership that's been shown on the important issue of workplace safety, as evidenced by the results I've just referenced.

So, Mr. Speaker, again in no particular order we're joined today by Blair Butler, Traditional Contracting Inc., Saskatoon; by Wayne Clifton and Jason Gasmol, Clifton Associates, Regina; by Cole Raiwet, Mike Silvernagle, Brent Lee of Core Industrial Services, Esterhazy, Saskatchewan. We're joined as well by Gord Broda of the Broda Group, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan; by Russ Clunie Sr. of Clunie Consulting Engineers, Prince Albert; Potzus Construction Ltd., Linton has joined us, Linton Potzus from Yorkton, Saskatchewan; Tony Playter from Fraser Strategy, who is from Regina. Also joining us today: Alisdair Dickinson and Chinh Chu from the Regina Bypass Design Builders, and Alan Shopland from the Regina Bypass Partners, Mr. Speaker.

Again we want to welcome all . . . Oh, and I'm sorry, and Mike Donnelly from Graham Construction as well. There's Mike. I just want to say to all of these individuals again to thank them for their leadership and the emphasis they've put on safety and for representing this project so very well from the Saskatchewan perspective, Mr. Speaker. And I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming these individuals to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it's my pleasure to join with the Premier and welcome these important guests to the Saskatchewan Assembly here today, important partners in building the Regina bypass. And very importantly, you're identifying this day around Regina bypass Safety Day and a record that's been shared here today that's very, very important for the people of the province.

Of course, this project and the response to these incredibly dangerous intersections out on Highway 1 East are such an important project. Ensuring the safe flow of traffic, ensuring safety at those intersections is something we've long advocated for.

And to each and every one of you, and particularly you as Saskatchewan businesses, I want to say thank you for your leadership and your work on this project. Your commitment to safety throughout the project is important, valued, critical. But the actual response that we need to bring to ensure safety along Highway 1 East where we've lost far too many — far too many — within our province is very, very important.

And to note, we have members opposite making a bit of noise,

Mr. Speaker. I want to be clear to these Saskatchewan businesses, we value what you do. We value your contributions to this project. And when we question and if we question, if we question where the full dollars of this bypass are going, we will always . . . what we'll always push for is making sure that it's Saskatchewan companies engaged to deliver value for all of us.

So thank you to these business leaders and those involved in this project, and thank you for the commitment to safety.

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

**Mr. Olason:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of the Assembly, I'd like to join with the Premier in welcoming Blair Butler from Traditional Contracting Inc. in Saskatoon. I would ask all members to welcome him to his Legislative Assembly.

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

**Mr. Steinley:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to join the Premier and the member from Saskatoon and thank the people from the Regina bypass. And I'd like to thank Wayne Clifton, Jason Gasmol, and their 40 employees for doing the wonderful work on Regina bypass, making our roads safer.

I'd also like to join and say greetings to my friend Tony Playter. He's a good friend of mine, and he's done a lot of work with Regina bypass. And you guys do great work for the people of the province, and I just want to say thank you. And I'd like all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Mr. Kaeding:** — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I'd like to welcome constituents who are currently working on the Regina bypass. From Esterhazy we have, with Core Industrial Services, Cole Raiwet, Mike Silvernagle and Brent Lee. I'd like all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Hon. Mr. Hargrave:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join the Premier and other members in welcoming some of our guests to their legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, first of all I'd like to introduce a friend of mine, Mr. Gord Broda. He's the head of Broda Group, Mr. Speaker. His father, Cas Broda, started the company in 1957 with one truck, and now Broda Group is one of the largest, most experienced companies in Western Canada. He operates out of Prince Albert and enjoys operating out of this province, out of Saskatchewan, finding jobs for Saskatchewan people. And we're very, very grateful for that, Mr. Speaker.

And joining him, Mr. Speaker, another solid Prince Albert resident and a valued, valued constituent, is Russ Clunie Sr. of Clunie Consulting Engineers.

Clunie Consulting employs 20 employees on the project, and

Broda employs 200 employees on the bypass project, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank them both, and I ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their legislature, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to join with the Premier and other colleagues on this side of the House welcoming these individuals, specifically Linton Potzus from Yorkton. Mr. Speaker, I've known Linton since he was a small boy working in the family business, Potzus Construction, started by his dad. Again I think one truck and one backhoe is what he started with. And he took over after his father passed away, as a very young man and has grown that company extraordinarily well, Mr. Speaker, employs I think about 150 people or so out of the Yorkton area and around the province. And just an amazing man, building this business and employee base and also very community oriented, giving back to the community at every turn, Mr. Speaker. So I ask that all members welcome Linton Potzus to his Legislative Assembly.

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

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the other members of the House that have already welcomed Gord Broda of the Broda Group, who happens to live in the beautiful constituency of Batoche. So thank you for being here and thank you for all you do for Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to all members, a group of 28 public servants seated in the Speaker's gallery and on the floor of the Chamber as well. They are here today as part of the parliamentary program for the public service. The participants are employees from the following ministries: Advanced Education, Agriculture, Central Services, Economy, Education, Finance, Health, Highways and Infrastructure, Municipal Affairs, Public Service Commission, Social Services, as well as employees from the Office of the Provincial Auditor and the Legislative Assembly Service.

The program includes an in-depth history and tour of the Legislative Building, briefings by the Legislative Library, Legislative Assembly committees branch and Executive Council, an opportunity to sit in the public galleries to observe question period and other House business, and briefings with members of the Legislative Assembly. I'd ask all members to help me welcome these fine individuals to their Legislative Assembly this afternoon.

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister opposite in welcoming these public servants to their Legislative Assembly. Certainly some of them know the way around this building very well indeed, Mr. Speaker, and indeed would have a lot to offer to us as legislators in terms of ways that we can better inform our work. And of course I'm speaking of the fine folks in the library, in particular, Mr. Speaker.

But certainly I want to commend these public servants for coming to the Legislative Assembly to participate in the parliamentary program to gain that understanding of the political side of the process so as to better serve the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, which is something that these men and women do every day of the year, and we are grateful for that. So on behalf of the official opposition, Mr. Speaker, I too want to join in welcoming these important people, these important public servants to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce a school group sitting in the west gallery from the Eston Composite School. There are 32 grade 4 and 5 students. They are accompanied by Ms. Jodi Bjornerud, who happens to be the former member from Melville-Saltcoats's daughter. Also a teacher is Tawna Hansen, and their chaperones are Erin Simpson, Jamie Hallborg, April MacDonald, and Greg Cooper.

It's kind of a rare occasion when a group from as far away as Eston comes down to the Legislature, so we're very pleased. And I want to add one thing — that I really am thankful for the fact that the member from Rosetown-Elrose has agreed to buy ice cream for all of them.

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

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too want to welcome the contractors that are working on the bypass, and to point out that the excellent work and certainly the safety track record that you've shown through the project thus far is something to be admired, and to assure you that we want to see as many contractors benefit as often and as to as much value as possible on any contracts in the province of Saskatchewan.

Obviously the half a billion dollars we're sending overseas as the financing fee for the P3 [public-private partnership] could be used to build many roads, many bridges, and many other engineering projects in the province delivered by these fine people. So I want to point out, we want to see these contractors continue working, continue visiting their Assembly, and may their numbers double, Mr. Speaker, over the next number of years. Thank you very much.

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

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of this Assembly, I'd like to introduce an individual seated behind me actually. It's Bob Ivanochko. He's a constituent of Regina Douglas Park and a friend, a writer, and a strong activist in the community. He's heavily involved with Making Peace Vigil in Regina, doing and advocating for many social justice issues in our province and in our city including things like homelessness and the poor.

Mr. Speaker, he's interested in legislative proceedings, and I'm very happy to have him here with us all this afternoon. So I'd ask all members join me in welcoming Bob to his Legislative Assembly.

**Hon. Mr. Tochor:** — I too would like to join the members and introduce a special person seated in my gallery: Wayne Smith, if you could give us a wave. Wayne lives in Eastview. He's been a good friend of mine for many years. His public service in education is outstanding, and now in retirement he spends his time helping out also with Meals on Wheels. And he's just a great resident of Saskatoon Eastview, and it's an honour to have him as a friend.

Would everyone please join with me in welcoming him to his Assembly.

[13:45]

## PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition. The people who have signed this petition are opposed to the Sask Party's plan to scrap and sell off the Saskatchewan Transportation Company. They would like us all to know that STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] provides a vital service to many seniors, workers, and families throughout the province; and that by scrapping STC out of the blue and without asking permission of the owners, the Saskatchewan people, the Sask Party is sending a clear sign about how little it cares about protecting our Crowns, like SaskTel; and that STC helps to drive the economy with the parcel service that serves farms and other businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I'll read the prayer:

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

It is supported by many leaders and thousands and thousands of citizens. I so present.

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

**Mr. Phillips:** — 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 this province.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Englefeld, Naicam, St. Gregor, Muenster, Humboldt, Melfort. I do so present.

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

Riversdale.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again today to present a petition opposing the Sask Party's cuts to spiritual care. Mr. Speaker, just a short while ago in committee, the minister told me in a discussion about this important program that there was an inequity of services, that we didn't offer spiritual care everywhere, Mr. Speaker. So instead of enhancing those services, Mr. Speaker, the government chose to cut them.

The petitioners point out that this budget eliminates funding for spiritual care facilities within our Saskatchewan health facilities. They point out that Saskatchewan will be the only province within Canada to not fund the support for patients, residents, and their families seeking wellness. They point out that the government, the Sask Party, did not tell anybody last year in last year's election that they had a plan to scrap spiritual care within our health region facilities. They point out, 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.

They point out that spiritual care supports families, patients, and residents in making difficult decisions. And the petitioners want to draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that spiritual care can provide support for all families, patients, and residents in obtaining comfort and support regardless of faith or belief, 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 from Elbow, Loreburn, Strongfield, and Saskatoon. I so submit.

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

**Mr. Belanger:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand in my place at the request and order of the member from Prince Albert Northcote for anyone in the Assembly to help her in her battle for a second bridge for Prince Albert. So, Mr. Speaker, I present a petition today in answering that call from the city of bridge.

There's no question, Mr. Speaker, that the need for a second bridge for Prince Albert has never been clearer than it is today. Prince Albert and all the communities north of Prince Albert, and businesses that send people and products through Prince Albert require a solution. So the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Ask the Sask Party government to 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, as we do day after day, week after week, month after month, we stand in our place in the Assembly to present this petition. And people have signed this petition from

all throughout Saskatchewanland. And on this particular page, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition are from Regina, Prince Albert. And I so present.

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

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

And we know that the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that in Saskatoon in 2016, women earned on average 63 cents for every dollar 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 this term of this Assembly, and that the Saskatchewan government call upon workplaces within Saskatchewan within the private sector to eliminate the wage gap between women and men.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition today come from Hubbard, Ituna, and Aylesbury, Saskatchewan. I do so present. Thank you.

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

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition to increase the funding to Prince Albert mobile crisis. Due to a cut in funding, Prince Albert mobile crisis has had to close its door during daytime hours, resulting in a loss of resource to people in distress. The daytime closure of Prince Albert mobile has put stress on Prince Albert Police Service, Victoria Hospital, and other agencies who may not be trained and/or qualified to provide counselling and intervention services to clients. 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 it may once again offer 24-hour emergency crisis service.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing this particular petition come from the city of Prince Albert. 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 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 the violence will follow them to their workplace.

Employers lose \$77.9 million annually due to the direct and indirect impacts of domestic violence. Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has already enacted a legislation very similar to the private member's bill we tabled several weeks ago, and we're hoping that the government will take it on and pass it. 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 survivors of domestic violence in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing this petition today come from Saskatoon, Wadena, and Nipawin. I do so present.

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### Prince Albert Sports Hall of Fame Induction Banquet

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday, April 29th, I had the pleasure of attending and bringing greetings to the induction banquet for the Prince Albert Sports Hall of Fame.

Mr. Speaker, the Prince Albert Sports Hall of Fame has been celebrating sports excellence in the city since 1988. The walls of the Art Hauser Centre, where the Prince Albert Sports Hall of Fame is located, are lined with the pictures and stories of those who have been inducted. Since its beginnings, there have been 182 inductees to the Hall of Fame in the following categories: athlete, builder, team, meritorious service, and organization of the year.

Mr. Speaker, this year's inductees included the late Douglas Primeau in the athlete category, Ken Morrison in the athlete/builder category, and Deanna Rindal in the builder category. In the team category, the 2017 inductees were the 2005 and 2006, and the 2006-2007 AAA Mintos hockey team. And the meritorious services inductee was Chris Lair. The sport organization of the year was Prince Albert Minor Hockey Association.

Mr. Speaker, these Prince Albert athletes, builders, and organizations have put in many hours of hard work and achieved their levels of success through determination and dedication. They are all deserving of this special recognition. I

ask that all members join with me in congratulating the 2017 Prince Albert Sports Hall of Fame inductees, and to commend the board of directors for organizing this event and ensuring that sports history of Prince Albert is celebrated and well documented. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Government Whip.

#### Legacy of the Battle of the Atlantic

**Mr. Lawrence:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not a day goes by that we shouldn't look back and thank those who fought for the freedom that allows us all to be here. This week is no different, and during this past week we saw the anniversary of VE [Victory in Europe] day and the end of the Battle of the Atlantic where the Allies defeated the Axis in Europe.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to honour those who fought for liberty for all. The story, however, does not end there. During the war, we lost thousands of men defending the shipping lanes that allowed the war effort to continue. Today, like then, transportation corridors are vitally important in our world. And like then, the Royal Canadian Navy and our sailors are making sure that the seas and oceans of our world remain free.

I had the pleasure of attending an event last weekend with Captain Jason Boyd of the Royal Canadian Navy where he had this to say, and I quote: "Today, more than 90 per cent of all global commerce travels by sea . . . Your navy strives to guarantee that the ocean remains free for all to lawfully use."

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this Assembly to join me in acknowledging VE day and the end of the Battle of the Atlantic, and to pay tribute to all those who have fought for our values, past and present, and recognize the great work of Canada's navy today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Caring for our Watersheds Competition

**Ms. Sproule:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to highlight Caring for our Watersheds, an environmental education competition which rewards students for their creativity in identifying solutions to local watershed issues.

Each year Agrium, in partnership with Partners for the Saskatchewan River Basin, invites students to submit proposals that answer the question, what can you do to improve your watershed? The program recognizes students and schools who come up with the most thought-provoking and innovative ideas to promote stewardship and sustainability for the Saskatchewan River Basin.

The contest, open to students who live in the Saskatchewan borders within the South Saskatchewan River Basin, allows students to compete for \$6,000 in rewards. Participating schools are also eligible for \$11,000 in rewards, and students who implement their ideas are eligible for additional funding.

Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday I was pleased to once again serve as a judge for the competition. Since it was introduced to

students in 2007, the competition has grown significantly. This past year in Saskatchewan we had a record number of participants in the program all from Saskatoon and area. The competition is open to all students grades 7 to 12. I would like to recognize this year's first-place contestants: Jinny Kim, Heather Grove, and Kassie Tan from Greystone Heights School for getting two low-flow toilets installed in their school.

I would like to ask my colleagues to please join with me in congratulating the participants, teachers, community volunteers, partners, and finalists for engaging in this very worthwhile competition.

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

#### **Kenneth Levene Graduate School of Business Dinner**

**Mr. Steinley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was honoured to join the Premier and the Lieutenant Governor in attending the Kenneth Levene Graduate School of Business dinner on May 2nd.

Mr. Speaker, this dinner was a time to celebrate the inspiring Levene legacy, bringing together a wide range of influential businesses, professionals, and educational leaders in our community.

Kenneth Levene was born into a family of hard-working individuals that immigrated from Russia to find a better life in Saskatchewan in the early 1900s. His grandfather opened Crescent Furniture in Regina which was family operated for 55 successful years.

In '05, in response to the great opportunities and freedoms his family received in Saskatchewan, Mr. Levene made the largest gift contribution in the history of the University of Regina. This enabled the launch of a new graduate school of business that is named in his honour.

[14:00]

Mr. Speaker, the keynote speaker for the Levene dinner was Brett Wilson. He shared inspiring stories of hardship, successful ventures, and his key steps to ensuring a healthy balance between life and work while keeping true to personal principles and morals. His passion for marketing, education, and philanthropy projected through the room, and I'm confident that each and every person in attendance learned some very valuable lessons from Mr. Wilson that evening.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask that all members join me in congratulating the Kenneth Levene school of business on hosting yet another successful event. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Opening of Newly Renovated Martensville High School**

**Ms. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, happy to rise to talk about even more schools that are being built in my constituency. On May 5th I was honoured to attend the opening

and ribbon cutting for the expanded and renovated Martensville High School. The school is state of the art, and I thank this government for its commitment of more than \$27 million towards this project. Martensville High School now has more than doubled in size, allowing for over 750 students.

Mr. Speaker, Martensville is one of the fastest growing cities in Saskatchewan, making the timing of this project so very important for this expanding community. Twenty new classrooms have been added as well as a new music room, science and computer lab, and support spaces for special needs and learning assistance programs. The new performing arts area which houses a 300-seat theatre will not only be utilized by students but by the community as well. The project also includes renovations to the original classrooms, library resource centre, gym, practical and applied arts, home ec, and industrial arts rooms.

I want to thank the Prairie Spirit School Division, the Ministry of Education, and the city of Martensville for their collaboration and partnership to make this project possible. I also want to thank the Minister of Education for attending the event, Mr. Speaker, and I know he'll be coming back to my communities a few more times before the fall as we cut ribbons on four new elementary schools in my riding.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Martensville on their new school. Thank you.

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

#### **Regina Surgical Centre Celebrates Fifth Anniversary**

**Mr. Makowsky:** — Well thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to announce the fifth anniversary of the Surgical Centres Inc., operating here in Regina. The publicly funded, privately run, multi-specialty facility for day surgeries was first opened in 2012 as part of the Saskatchewan surgical initiatives plan to reduce wait times. The surgical process at the centre is similar to what's offered in a hospital setting, with all the surgeries being scheduled by the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region.

Over the past five years the backlog, the long backlog of patients waiting for surgery has dropped significantly. Close to 22,000 surgeries have been performed at the Regina surgery centre and more than 33,000 surgeries have been done at Prairieview in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, prior to the surgical initiative, patients waited for — get this — up to 24 months for some procedures. When the members opposite were in government, Saskatchewan had the longest wait times in Canada, and maybe even worse, they did nothing about it. Their former leader even said they'd shut down these privately run clinics if his party formed government in the recent provincial election.

Mr. Speaker, our government's going to continue pursuing innovation in health care that puts Saskatchewan patients first, way before rigid and outdated ideology. I'd ask all members please to join me in congratulating Regina Surgical Centre and wish them all the best as they continue to serve Saskatchewan residents. Thank you.



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

### **Regina Bypass Design Builders' Safety Record**

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was already mentioned today a number of reps are here from the Regina Bypass Design Builders or RBDB, and actually just a very few of all the Saskatchewan companies that are working on that bypass.

Mr. Speaker, when the first portion of the bypass opens in October of this year it will improve the safety of motorists, reduce congestion, and help producers and shippers get Saskatchewan products to and from market efficiently.

Today I'd like to recognize the RBDB for their safety record, during North American Occupational Safety and Health Week. To date, over 4,300 employees working on the project have taken the 90-minute safety orientation. And the bypass builders and its subcontractors have worked more than two million hours on the bypass project without a single lost-time incident.

Mr. Speaker, this is a remarkable feat considering the largest transportation infrastructure project this province has ever seen and the nature of the work that they're in.

Mr. Alisdair Dickinson, the project coordinator for the bypass, had this to say: "While we are proud that we have reached over two million work hours with zero lost-time incidents, this is [just] a milestone in our journey and not our end goal," Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask all members to congratulate RBDB and all of the companies, especially all the Saskatchewan companies, that are working on this bypass project for Saskatchewan people.

**The Speaker:** — Why is the member from Carrot River on his feet?

**Mr. Bradshaw:** — Ask for leave to make an introduction, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

### **INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS**

**Mr. Bradshaw:** — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the House, I would like to introduce a group of 10 grade 6 to 9 students from Pasquia Hills Christian School up in Carrot River. They're accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Doug Reimer, and chaperones Carmen Reimer, Kimberly Isaac, David and Meaghan Schmidt, and Mike and Heidi Isaac.

I'd like to ask all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

### **QUESTION PERIOD**

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

### **Closing of Saskatchewan Transportation Corporation**

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — When the Sask Party decided to spring their surprise STC sell-off on Saskatchewan people, they shut everything down and gave us a sneak peak of how the Sask Party wants people to get around once STC is gone.

Some of the costs the Sask party racked up for their reckless announcement have already been discussed by the media, but on top of the customers who were forced to cancel their plans — medical appointments, job interviews, training, family visits, and meetings — we know that the cost of getting just those that were stranded around for that one day . . . Mr. Speaker, on top of those other costs, 105 people were put in taxis at a cost of \$21,380, Mr. Speaker. That was the cost just to taxi around those that were stranded for this ill-conceived sell-off.

Mr. Speaker, how could the Sask Party be so irresponsible on day one, and how are the people of Saskatchewan supposed to have any faith in this desperate sell-off?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the decision to wind down STC was a difficult decision to make, understanding there would be the lives of those who worked at STC impacted in a very real way and there would also be those who were relying and who had already booked trips on STC. Mr. Speaker, the government in making this decision had to pick transition times and means to provide for some sort of interim service for trips that had been booked, Mr. Speaker. We have budgeted into this the fact that in the first year there would be a cost to a wind-down . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the Deputy Leader is saying, heckling, to tell the people. Mr. Speaker, I'm endeavouring, I'm endeavouring to answer the question right now for all members of the House. Mr. Speaker, and so these transition plans were put in place.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that as of right now, the per-passenger subsidy from the taxpayers for STC passengers is around \$90, \$90 per passenger, Mr. Speaker. When the member who is heckling, the one who is heckling, when he was the minister responsible and he faced a passenger subsidy of around \$5, he decided to close routes.

**An Hon. Member:** — I didn't shut it down. You shut it down.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — So instead . . . Well no, actually he shut the routes down. When he was the . . . He's still heckling. If he checks his own history and his own *Hansard*, he will know, as a minister of the Crown, he closed routes for STC, and that's when the subsidy was only about five bucks a passenger, Mr. Speaker. They've grown to \$90. So I would ask that member who's heckling from his seat, why doesn't he stand up and explain why it was okay for them to shut down routes at \$5 but not appropriate for the government to make a decision at a \$90 subsidy?

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, the Premier, of course he wasn't straight with Saskatchewan people, has already admitted that they needed their privatization bill to scrap STC, but that was of course contradicting what his members had said throughout debate and after the bill had passed.

You know, the Sask Party's fumbled this sell-off every step of the way, and they're making Saskatchewan people pay the price. And it appears they're costing Saskatchewan people their privacy as well. A private company wrote to STC freight customers, and I quote: "Carpe Diem Express Inc. will be seamlessly transferring your account and pricing with little or no . . . [charges]."

Mr. Speaker, STC has been quick to deny any affiliation, but the question needs to be answered. First, we still don't know why this company, the company was so confident enough to advertise to hire drivers to take over STC freight routes. And second, how did this private company get the private information of STC's customers? Why won't the Premier come clean on these questions? Most importantly, why won't he scrap this desperate sell-off?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hargrave:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this company that the Leader of the Opposition is mentioning, Mr. Speaker, I have had no conversations with that company, Mr. Speaker, other than they have been told to stop using STC's name in any of their advertising, in any of their literature. And, Mr. Speaker, they have received a letter from our solicitor advising them of the same thing.

We have no idea of how they would've obtained any information, Mr. Speaker, other than maybe somebody from the ATU [Amalgamated Transit Union] or somewhere else, Mr. Speaker, that may have got that. Mr. Speaker, they did not get that from us.

These companies have applied to the Highway Traffic Board, Mr. Speaker, for operating certificates, Mr. Speaker. This company here, Mr. Speaker, we have had no conversations with and my officials have had no conversations with about anything to do with the routes of STC, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Details of Land Transactions

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — It's answers like that that has Saskatchewan people rightfully concerned about this sell-off and the general management of that government. On front after front, the Sask Party hides the facts and refuses to come clean.

At the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] we now know that the Ministry of Highways serves as a holding company for land. So even though the minister responsible doesn't, I guess, like answering questions in committee about it, but there's no doubt that the scandalous happenings at the GTH are hurting Saskatchewan taxpayers. You see, when the GTH sells land,

they're actually selling land owned by the Ministry of Highways. But, Mr. Speaker, even though the GTH takes the full cash value on the sale, they only pay the Ministry of Highways back the price that they paid for it, which of course could be much, much less than the current value of the land.

You know, instead of refusing to answer another GTH question, can the Premier simply tell us if the Sask Party has the Ministry of Highways or any other ministry or Crown, ultimately Saskatchewan taxpayers, bankrolling any other enterprises or deals in the same way that they are the GTH?

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

**Hon. Mr. Harrison:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to address one of the elements in the premise of the member's question which I'm confused about. I don't think he was at estimates. He wasn't at estimates last night, but there were questions which I responded to at Economy estimates with regard to the GTH, despite the fact that they weren't relevant to the Economy ministry, as the GTH is a treasury board Crown, as members well know. That being said, I committed to the member for Nutana . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . well, the member for, the Deputy Leader doesn't want to listen to the answer. He seems to have a lot to say from his seat, Mr. Speaker, and very, very little from his feet.

But, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the undertaking, I provided an undertaking that we will, with the Economy Committee, review the GTH annual report in the near future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Sproule:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see that the minister has come around to talk about the GTH, but that wasn't an answer to the question.

SaskPower gave the GTH \$25 million for land that was still in the name of the Ministry of Highways. The GTH only paid Highways about \$3 million for the deal. It makes no sense, Mr. Speaker, and taxpayers are getting hosed. They lose out when the GTH shortchanges the ministry, and they lose out when the Sask Party approves SaskPower to pay the ridiculously exorbitant price for the land.

So who wins, Mr. Speaker? Who wins? Well the GTH wins twice, and let's not forget that ultimately this gave GTH the cash needed to help those two Sask Party supporters make \$11 million. Mr. Speaker, how can the Sask Party continue to defend their GTH scandal?

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

**Hon. Mr. Harrison:** — Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course the member opposite well knows that the auditor went into these matters. The auditor provided a report to the Public Accounts Committee which was discussed at Public Accounts, reviewed by Public Accounts. The auditor had access to all of the information which she saw.

[14:15]

And I would like to underline some good news which we were able to announce last week at the GTH, a \$45 million investment made by a company, Brightenvue, with regard to a global trade and exhibition centre at the GTH. Over seven and a half million dollars has been paid for the property at the GTH.

We're looking forward to that construction beginning, Mr. Speaker, and we look forward to a new business out at the GTH. Thank you very much.

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

**Ms. Sproule:** — Mr. Speaker, sometimes I wonder if that minister has even read the auditor's report. The auditor's report had nothing to do with the purchase of land at the GTH by SaskPower. If he recalls, it was about the east parcels in the bypass, Mr. Speaker.

Now here we have a minister who refused to answer questions on the GTH last night because he didn't think they impacted the budget. But the Ministry of Highways — and that means you and me — is continuously losing money on these so-called deals, Mr. Speaker.

The Sask Party handed 300 acres of land to CP Rail [Canadian Pacific Railway] for free. SaskPower didn't get this treatment; less than half of the land and they paid \$25 million. All the while power rates continue to skyrocket and the Ministry of Highways is getting railroaded.

Mr. Speaker, with the GTH collecting all the profits, none of the money makes it back to the Saskatchewan people. Well, not to those who aren't well-connected, anyways. So why did the Sask Party set up the system this way?

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

**Hon. Mr. Harrison:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, as is the par for the course for the members opposite, the premise of their question is nonsense. The transfer of land to Canadian Pacific, as the deputy leader — who has a lot to say from his seat and continues to, from his seat, very little from his feet — as that member well knows, as the minister responsible at that time, this was the NDP [New Democratic Party] plan, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP were very aware that in order for the Global Transportation Hub to be successful and go forward there was a necessity for CP to relocate from downtown Regina to the Global Transportation Hub. That was something that was supported by the city of Regina, by the national government, and by the government of the day, represented by the minister who is now the deputy leader of the NDP.

Those members opposite approved \$33 million in order to set up the GTH, a major component of which was relocating CP.

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

### Carbon Pricing and Carbon Capture and Storage

**Ms. Sproule:** — Mr. Speaker, it was the Saskatchewan taxpayers' money that the Sask Party wasted on the GTH scandal, and they have the right to transparency. Now given the Premier's complaints about redacted federal documents, I would hope that he would agree.

In fact yesterday the Minister of Energy finally provided a little transparency of his own. He admitted that the Sask Party has already created their own price on carbon. In fact despite denying it here before, that's now the message they're trying to send to Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

We have all had to bear witness to the Premier and the minister grandstanding and having Twitter tantrums about the potential of putting a price on carbon. So my question to the minister is, will he please tell the Premier what he told the public yesterday, that the Sask Party is already taxing Saskatchewan people on carbon through their \$1.5 billion carbon capture tax?

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

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the member opposite for the question. And the fact of the matter is and the investment that she refers to is the highest public investment in any carbon mitigation scheme in the nation, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan has a great story when it comes to talking about our environmental footprint and our efforts with respect to climate change, Mr. Speaker, and carbon capture and storage is most definitely part of that, Mr. Speaker, with that plant up and fully operational as we speak.

Mr. Speaker, we have a great message on action that has been taken in agriculture and sequestration through our zero till agriculture and some of the genetic and agronomic efforts that have been made, Mr. Speaker.

We have a great, a great story, Mr. Speaker, in our energy power generation mix, moving to 50 per cent renewables here in the province of Saskatchewan by the year 2030, Mr. Speaker, resulting in a 40 per cent reduction in our emissions in that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have a great effort and initiatives that have taken place already in the province of Saskatchewan in private industry, in our public Crown corporations, in our carbon mitigation, in our carbon sequestration here, Mr. Speaker, and we look forward to more in the future.

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

**Ms. Sproule:** — Mr. Speaker, I really had hoped that we had turned a new corner towards a more realistic view of reality, but here we are again. Of course, Mr. Speaker, we are opposed to the federal government imposing their scheme on us, of course.

Now let's be clear: these are the minister's words, Mr. Speaker, not mine. He said, and quote, "The people of Saskatchewan are paying for the price of mitigating carbon and that should be recognized."

Hypocritical tantrums aren't getting us anywhere except closer to having Ottawa impose their carbon tax. Now that they've admitted it, how can the Sask Party still stand there and deny that they've already slapped on a \$1.5 billion job-killing carbon capture tax?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, only the member opposite who wants to kill the coal industry in the province of Saskatchewan, who's on the record as wanting to kill the coal industry in the province of Saskatchewan, could equate a one-time technological investment of \$1.5 billion with a forever \$2.5-billion-annual, federally imposed carbon tax. That's the difference between investing in technology and a tax, Mr. Speaker.

Now the member says, of course we're against the federally imposed carbon tax. By the way, now we find out that if we don't impose our own tax, the threat from the Trudeau government is that we're going to get the Notley, a federally imposed Notley carbon tax, an NDP carbon tax next door.

But, Mr. Speaker, if her position is that the NDP in our province are all on the same page now and they don't agree with, they don't agree with Premier Notley, they might want to tell the potential leader that's sitting in the back row. Because the day after Trudeau made his announcement, what did he say — and he's clearly a potential leadership candidate — he said it's about time we did carbon pricing, the likes of which the Prime Minister announced, Mr. Speaker.

So don't leave it to the critic. I'd ask the Leader of the NDP, the interim Leader of the NDP, to stand up and answer a couple of questions. One, how is a one-time technological investment a tax forever? And secondly, what is his actual position on a federally imposed carbon tax?

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

### Grants-in-Lieu Program

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Mr. Speaker, everywhere you turn, the Sask Party is making . . .

[Interjections]

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

**Ms. Rancourt:** — Mr. Speaker, everywhere you turn, the Sask Party is making Saskatchewan people pay for the Sask Party mismanagement, scandal, and waste. SaskEnergy collected surcharges from over 100 cities and towns with their grants-in-lieu. They collected these surcharges from those specific communities and then paid them directly back to those specific communities.

Now that money is going to the GRF [General Revenue Fund]. It's a Sask Party tax, Mr. Speaker. Here's what the minister said about it, and I quote, "It was a special tax prior for the municipalities, but that special tax, if that's you want to call it,

is now going to the GRF."

Mr. Speaker, if that's not downloading, I don't know what is. The minister admitted that this was yet another tax to help make up for their deficit. How can the minister justify this tax on families that she has turned into a cut to their hometowns?

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

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For three years, as that member well knows that the resource revenues have been declining in this province. And in two of those years, the municipalities have received increased dollars from this government as support for our municipalities.

In this year however, we were asking them to help share in the challenges that we are experiencing, Mr. Speaker, and we did it through a very confusing, inequitable, and not-transparent program of grants-in-lieu in SaskPower and SaskEnergy.

As the member opposite knows, in SaskPower, everybody pays for that. Only the cities were recipients of that program. But for SaskEnergy, the residents within the communities, there's only about a quarter of the urban communities that had this program, and those residents pay a charge that went to the municipality this year. While we are in transition, it will be going to the General Revenue Fund. It makes absolutely no difference to their bill. And we will be correcting this anomaly, as well, in the transition year, Mr. Speaker.

For my property in Humboldt, Mr. Speaker, it's between 3 and \$4, and instead of going to the municipality this year, it's going to the GRF.

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

**Ms. Rancourt:** — The quote speaks for itself, Mr. Speaker. It's yet another tax hike from the Sask Party. Some communities, through their energy bills, will pay this tax, while others will not. The minister herself acknowledged that this is unfair. She said, "... I absolutely agree with where you're going, that those residents shouldn't be the only contributors to a shortfall on the General Revenue Fund."

Mr. Speaker, the changes to the grants-in-lieu program that they want to pass today make the system less fair, not more. The people that live in these cities and towns will pay even more for the Sask Party's mismanagement, scandal, and waste. The minister admitted it's unfair and that it needs to be fixed. So will she fix it today and scrap Bill 64, or will she endorse legislation that she has admitted is flawed and unfair?

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

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, I know from time to time the member opposite has struggled, and I have never said the legislation is flawed and unfair. I said the programs are flawed and unfair and need to be fixed, and we're in a transition year, Mr. Speaker.

This does not change my energy bill in the city of Humboldt. It doesn't change it one little bit. I was always paying this charge, Mr. Speaker. It changes where that charge goes. In my case, in Humboldt, it's between 3 and \$4. I talked to the Minister of Energy and Resources. Apparently for his property in Regina, it's the same amount, Mr. Speaker. So we are redirecting where that charge went. It's not a new charge that I haven't been paying all these years while I've been residing in Humboldt, Mr. Speaker. And so, that is what we're going to be working on as we're in the transition year. It wasn't fair before, quite frankly, because only a handful of communities could access that program, and the majority of them could not.

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

### Government's Fiscal Management and Reporting of Political Donations

**Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Speaker, talk about arrogance and out of touch, out of touch. You know, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party have targeted families with deep cuts and tax hikes, and yet corporations walk away with tax giveaways. They weren't even asking for them. Mr. Speaker, understandably Saskatchewan people are asking why. Why is the Sask Party doing so much to help the wealthy and well connected, while cutting everyone else?

Well, Mr. Speaker, allowing big and out-of-province money into Saskatchewan politics invites those questions. The Sask Party wants to point fingers. They want to say, what about you? They want to say, what about then? Well here we are, Mr. Speaker, here and now. If the Sask Party passes our bill with us, big money — corporate, wealthy, well-connected, and yes, yes even union money — will be gone for everyone. So why, why, Mr. Speaker, won't the Sask Party join us in getting big money out of Saskatchewan politics?

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

**Hon. Mr. Doherty:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the hon. member's preamble to his question, he talks about corporate income tax in this budget, Mr. Speaker. And they keep asking questions during this session as to why would a government on this side of the House reduce corporate income taxes at a time like this when there are, perhaps, some challenges in our economy and trying to stimulate our economy, Mr. Speaker.

So I went back to take a look at what previous budgets might have come down under the previous NDP government, Mr. Speaker. And in 2006, this member might remember this because I have a quote for him, in 2006 when the economy was doing relatively better than it is doing today — I will admit that — that NDP government, Mr. Speaker, cut corporate income taxes by 29 per cent over three years, over the ensuing three years. And why, Mr. Speaker? Well, let's listen to the member from Saskatoon Centre, who said this: "But I want to highlight some of those of particular . . ."

**The Speaker:** — Whoa. Whoa. It's getting increasingly more difficult to hear the question and the response. Would we please be respectful and listen to the response from the Finance

minister?

**Hon. Mr. Doherty:** — This government reduced, has reduced corporate income taxes by 8 per cent over the course of the next three years. Twenty-nine per cent over the course of three years in their last budget before they went to the polls in 2007. The member from Saskatoon Centre said:

But I want to highlight some of those of particular interest to my neighbours and the community downtown. The first of course would be the business tax cuts. These are significant, but I believe the plan as laid out by Jack Vicq and his commission is sound, and clearly the time is right for us to make this investment. It is clear that businesses see this initiative as an opportunity to invest here in our province, creating jobs and opportunities and as well ensuring that wages and benefits are competitive. The time is now, and this is very essential.

That's what he said on corporate income tax cuts, Mr. Speaker.

[14:30]

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I've got to tell you, this government . . . especially that minister who says, perhaps there's some challenges with our budget, perhaps there's some challenges. But I appreciate the great research.

But that was then, and here we are today. Here we are today. And it's clear from their actions, it's clear from their actions they have totally forgotten who they're working for, who they're working for, Mr. Speaker. Sixty million dollars in corporate tax cuts while taking \$60 million out of our kids' classrooms, Mr. Speaker, and a \$38 million tax cut for the wealthy and well connected while everyday families are asked to pay a billion dollars more in PST [provincial sales tax].

They're taking money hand over fist from lobbyists who represent the phone companies that have been circling SaskTel like sharks. And instead of working for Saskatchewan families and defending our Crowns, Mr. Speaker, they're churning up the waters.

Hasn't the Sask Party heard enough? Why, Mr. Speaker, why won't they join us and get big money out of Saskatchewan politics?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday there was a general election in the province of British Columbia, and that election will impact the province of Saskatchewan in real ways. If it stands, for example, that an NDP-led coalition becomes the elected government of British Columbia for any reason, we know that jobs at Evraz are in danger. Jobs at Evraz will be in danger. I think the member, the Leader of the NDP has agreed that the NDP position in BC [British Columbia] is wrong.

The member just asked a question impugning, I guess, the

motives of this side of the House, depending on who may have contributed to the Saskatchewan Party. Here are the returns for the Saskatchewan NDP from the last election. Schedule A, Mr. Speaker, canvasses the associations that give money to the NDP for the last election. The number one contributor to the Saskatchewan NDP was the British Columbia NDP — \$7,519 from the BC NDP to those members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

So we would like to know on this side of the House, what was the BC NDP's expectation for this money? We would believe, Mr. Speaker, that the motives on that side of the House are quite right in this regard, that it was simply a donation, because that's typically what happens in politics, Mr. Speaker.

But maybe the member wants to answer now or tomorrow in question period or later, why is the number one associate donor to the NDP the same party in that province, the NDP, that would kill jobs in Regina, Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker?

### 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 that it's considered certain estimates, to present its third report. I move:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice be now concurred in.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Chair:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice be concurred in.

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. I recognize the Chair of the 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. 64, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (SaskPower and SaskEnergy) Amendment Act, 2017* with amendment.

**The Speaker:** — When shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I request leave to waive consideration

in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill and its amendments be now read the third time.

**The Speaker:** — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bills for Bill No. 64 and that the bill and its amendments be now read a third time. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. When shall this amendment be read the first time? I recognize the minister.

### FIRST AND SECOND READINGS OF AMENDMENTS

#### Bill No. 64 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (SaskPower and SaskEnergy) Amendment Act, 2017*

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — I move that the amendments be now read a first and second time.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the minister that the amendments be now read a first and second 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 and second reading of the amendments.

**The Speaker:** — The minister may proceed to move third reading. I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

### THIRD READINGS

#### Bill No. 64 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (SaskPower and SaskEnergy) Amendment Act, 2017*

**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 the Bill No. 64 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.

**Some Hon. Members:** — No.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. Call in the members.

[The division bells rang from 14:37 until 14:39.]

**The Speaker:** — All those in favour please rise.

**[Yeas — 45]**

Wall	Moe	Wyant
Reiter	Morgan	Harpauer
Doherty	Duncan	Beaudry-Mellor
Hargrave	D'Autremont	Heppner
Boyd	Cheveldayoff	Marit
Tell	Eyre	Merriman
Harrison	Ottenbreit	Weekes
Brkich	Hart	Kirsch
Steinley	Makowsky	Phillips
Lawrence	Wilson	Campeau
Docherty	Michelson	Cox
Olauson	Steele	Young
Fiaz	Dennis	McMorris
Bonk	Carr	Nerlien
Lambert	Buckingham	Kaeding

**The Speaker:** — All those opposed please rise.

**[Nays — 11]**

Wotherspoon	Vermette	Chartier
Belanger	Sproule	Forbes
Rancourt	Beck	McCall
Sarauer	Meili	

**Clerk:** — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the third reading motion, 45; those opposed, 11.

**The Speaker:** — The motion is carried.

**Clerk:** — Third reading of this bill.

### **PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

#### **Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies**

**Ms. Young:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present its third report. I move:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies be now concurred in.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Chair:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies be now concurred in.

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. I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

**Ms. Young:** — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report Bill No. 50, *The Provincial Capital Commission Act*, with amendment.

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

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

**The Speaker:** — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bills for Bill No. 50 and the bill and its amendments be now read a third time. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. When shall the amendments be read a first time? I recognize the Minister of Central Services.

### **FIRST AND SECOND READINGS OF AMENDMENTS**

#### **Bill No. 50 — *The Provincial Capital Commission Act***

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — I move that the amendments be now read a first and second time.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the minister that the amendments be now read a first and second 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 and second reading of the amendments.

**The Speaker:** — The minister may proceed to move third reading. I recognize the Minister of Central Services.

### **THIRD READINGS**

#### **Bill No. 50 — *The Provincial Capital Commission Act***

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — 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. 50 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.

Economy be now concurred in.

**Some Hon. Members:** — No.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**The Speaker:** — Carried. Call in the members.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

[The division bells rang from 14:44 until 14:45.]

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

**The Speaker:** — All those in favour please rise.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

#### [Yeas — 45]

Wall	Moe	Wyant
Reiter	Morgan	Harpauer
Doherty	Duncan	Beaudry-Mellor
Hargrave	D'Autremont	Heppner
Boyd	Cheveldayoff	Marit
Tell	Eyre	Merriman
Harrison	Ottenbreit	Weekes
Brkich	Hart	Kirsch
Steinley	Makowsky	Phillips
Lawrence	Wilson	Campeau
Docherty	Michelson	Cox
Olauson	Steele	Young
Fiaz	Dennis	McMorris
Bonk	Carr	Nerlien
Lambert	Buckingham	Kaeding

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

Orders of the day. I recognize the Government House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this House recess until 3 o'clock.

**The Speaker:** — The Government House Leader has moved that the House recess. 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:** — All those opposed please rise.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. This Assembly stands recessed until 3 p.m.

#### [Nays — 11]

Wotherspoon	Vermette	Chartier
Belanger	Sproule	Forbes
Rancourt	Beck	McCall
Sarauer	Meili	

[The Assembly recessed from 14:48 until 15:00.]

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

**Clerk:** — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the third reading motion, 45; those opposed, 11.

**Clerk Assistant:** — Committee of Finance.

**The Speaker:** — The motion is carried.

**The Speaker:** — I do now leave the Chair for Committee of Finance.

**Clerk:** — Third reading of this bill.

#### COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

#### PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on the Economy.

#### Standing Committee on the Economy

**Mr. Makowsky:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present its third report. I move:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on the Economy be now concurred in.

**The Chair:** — Members, I'll call the Committee of Finance to order. The item before the committee today is Executive Council, vote 10. Before I call on the Premier to introduce his officials, I would just like to make a couple of comments. I believe I do this every year for the benefit of new members, and particularly for those people that may be watching our proceedings here this afternoon.

Committee of Finance operates somewhat differently than the standing committees. All the members of the Assembly are members of Committee of Finance, and so with that only members may participate in Committee of Finance, which is different than the standing committees where ministers may call upon their officials to provide answers. In Committee of Finance, only members may participate.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Chair:

I would just remind members that they are not to interact with officials, and officials also are not to interact with members. And the other difference that people may notice is that when

That the third report on the Standing Committee on the



members are speaking, they stand in their place.

So with that, I would ask the Premier to introduce the officials that he has with him today. I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you for those introductory remarks. Mr. Chair, I just want to say I'm looking forward to the proceedings this afternoon. Whenever possible, I'm going to endeavour to provide immediate answers to the Leader of the Opposition and if there are critics as well that have questions. If we're unable to provide immediate answers, Mr. Chair, we'll undertake to provide that information at the earliest opportunity to members of the House.

Mr. Chair, I'm very pleased to be able to introduce some senior advisers who have joined me here to better assist me in providing those answers to the opposition and, through the opposition, to the public and to the public record.

To my immediate left, Mr. Chair, is Alanna Koch. She is the deputy minister to the Premier and the cabinet secretary, Mr. Speaker. On my right is Reg Downs. Reg is a senior adviser in my office, senior adviser to the Premier. Kent Campbell is the deputy minister for Intergovernmental Affairs for the province of Saskatchewan. Immediately behind him is James Saunders who's the associate deputy minister in cabinet planning; and then just to James's right is Bonita Cairns who is the executive director of corporate services; and then Jarret Coels who is the manager, the chief of staff, if you will, I guess, for House business for the government. And I think I've got them all.

So I just want to thank all of these folks in advance for the work that has gone into preparing for today and also what's about to take place over the next little while. I also thank members opposite and the Leader of the Opposition in advance for the questions that he and others might be asking today.

**General Revenue Fund  
Executive Council  
Vote 10**

**Subvote (EX01)**

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Premier. I will now call Executive Council, vote 10, subvote (EX01), central management and services. The Premier may proceed to make his opening statement.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chair, there's not a lot to add perhaps that might take away from the questions and answers, save to say, I guess, I mean the biggest issue that has unfolded in the province over the last while has been the provincial budget. And the Executive Council or, I guess, the Premier's department of government or ministry of government if you will, has taken part in the austerity of the government. There have been reductions. We can get into the specifics of those.

I would also say that the political side of government, I guess, for which I would certainly be responsible, has continued to see reductions. Mr. Chairman, we've reduced the size of cabinet an additional seat. That's over and above the reductions in the size of cabinet when we first took office in 2007.

Mr. Chair, members will know that we also led the effort, that now all members have engaged in, to reduce our salaries by 3.5 per cent in an exemplary way as we head towards what will hopefully be a reduction of 3.5 per cent as well across the government in terms of public sector compensation.

We have significantly reduced travel, Mr. Chair. We've significantly reduced travel on the part of ministers. In fact 2016-17, the number of out-of-province trips was down 66 per cent compared to '06-07. We don't expect a major increase in that. In fact, as you will know, we took steps to wind down executive air, the government planes, as a part of the budget initiative. So our travel versus who preceded us in government is down and will continue to stay down as a result of this particular budget.

Mr. Chair, the same will be true for political staff. There are 26 fewer staff in the Executive Council, or the Premier's office, today than there were when we took over. Mr. Chairman, salaries are 200,000 less per month for those staff in the Premier's office, Executive Council, and that trend will also continue. Mr. Chair, the same could be said of advertising as well and those kinds of expenses that sometimes Premiers do and must answer for. They're down, and they'll continue to stay down as a result of the budget.

So I know that we'll get into a wide-ranging debate and discussion about other issues, and I want to make time for that. But those would be, respecting my own area of government, the Executive Council, those would be a few opening remarks. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to engage in the estimates here today on behalf of the official opposition but, more importantly, the people of Saskatchewan. I thank the Premier for his time here today, and I'd really want to thank the officials that have joined us and certainly civil servants across the province that help administer the program of government.

I'm not going to get into long remarks here right now because I really want to get to the questions. But we're facing unprecedented times in Saskatchewan and a betrayal by a government of Saskatchewan people that's rare, that's unique. And the fight for Saskatchewan people is real because of the choices of this government. And we're going to enter into this discussion here today thinking of all of Saskatchewan, from the North to the South, from every corner and points in between, and to stand strong for the people of our province.

Certainly, you know, this is on the heels of an election about a year ago. And even in that election, of course this is a Premier and a Sask Party that wasn't straight with Saskatchewan people. The very few promises that they did offer up, many of them already broken, and we can canvass those here today.

But a critical area where this government wasn't straight was the state of the finances. And we'll get into some other remarks, but we don't just have a deficit of dollars, as we'll speak about right now. But there's a deficit of decency in the choices that are being made and being imposed on Saskatchewan people.

As it relates to not being straight with Saskatchewan people, I guess, my question to the Premier is, he went before people a year ago and sort of said one thing about the state of the finances that wasn't in line with the reality at all. My question is, why was that the case? Why did he chose to do that?

[15:15]

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Chair, thanks very much. You know, we're going to have a debate here, and that's how it should be in Premier's estimates. And I certainly make this commitment to the hon. member, even though I may just fundamentally disagree with what him and his party espouse in terms of their economic policies, which we know the result of those economic policies that were visited on this province for 16 years, well actually for much longer than that.

Mr. Speaker, I don't agree with those policies. I don't agree with even what they were campaigning on in the last election with respect to what their environmental policies would have been and the seeming dissonance that exists between today's, I would say, very urban NDP and the realities of this province as one that has an increasingly diversified economy that does rely though, however, on agriculture and the resource sector.

So while I may not agree at all with their policies to the extent I know what they are, and that's sometimes hard to discern, I won't ever question the member's decency. I fundamentally think he's a decent fellow and that his colleagues are also decent. I believe that they want what's best for Saskatchewan. I don't necessarily agree with their plan to get us to that point, and that's why we have this place, I guess.

And neither do I agree with his characterization about the election campaign, the central . . . There weren't many promises in the election campaign precisely because we said the province's finances were not healthy. We in fact campaigned on the same finances that the leader, well that the NDP campaigned on. That was the Q3 [third quarter] report prepared by the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, maybe the interim leader of the NDP was aware that we would get snow on October the 8th that would never leave, that would cause another \$230 million of deficit pressure on top of the deficit that we did campaign on. I mean, maybe he knew that. I didn't know that when we were campaigning. I didn't expect a \$230 million additional crop insurance liability.

We did budget for crop insurance claims for that year, to be sure. We would have budgeted in sort of an average way, I'm assuming. But, Mr. Chairman, we didn't budget for a snow in October that wouldn't go away. Neither did we budget for what the analysts, what the forecasters were saying would not happen, which was stubbornly low and continuingly low resource commodity prices. But that is what happened.

And so, Mr. Chairman, when those numbers were becoming obvious, the impact of that late harvest, a quarter billion dollars in additional crop insurance exposure to the province's budgets, which are now summary as the member knows, and the ongoing lagging commodity prices, Mr. Chair, we disclosed those numbers in the quarterly reports. And then, frankly, we shared them with groups like SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban

Municipalities Association] and SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] in the run-up to the budget. It highlighted just how serious this was.

Mr. Chairman, we also campaigned in the election on balancing the budget. We thought it would take us another year. Mr. Chairman, because of these circumstances, because of what happened with respect to those crop insurance claims and continuing softness in resource prices, we listened to Saskatchewan people who said to go to balance in the timeline that we had campaigned on would visit undue harm on the programs. The very programs that he doesn't want to see cut in this budget would've been cut much more if we would've maintained that commitment that we did make in the campaign.

It's also true that we'd have to increase taxes significantly, much, much more than the shift that we did, would've prescribed if we would have tried to get to balance in one year. And so we listened to Saskatchewan people who are saying, let's have a longer term plan than the one-year plan we campaigned on. And that's what was introduced by the Minister of Finance in this session; it is a three-year plan to get to balance.

Mr. Chairman, as a part of that plan, we're going to see real tax advantages for our economy going forward, and I'm sure we're going to get into a debate about that. But again I would just say to the hon. member, I don't agree with his characterization of the character of people on this side of the House or the level of decency that may exist on this side of the House. I would not do that.

I know we're going to have a vigorous debate and disagreement. That is meet and it's right, and it is as it should be but, Mr. Speaker, I would defend the intent and the motives of the women and the men on this side of the House to keep the major promise of that election campaign, which was to keep this province strong. We think we need to do that with a long-term plan to get to balance and a plan to keep our taxes competitive, a plan to shift away from the dependency of resource revenue and, Mr. Chairman, that's what this budget does.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, the Premier may not like being challenged on this front, and you know, I believe him to be a decent person. But this budget and the choices made by him and that cabinet are clearly not decent. It's not decent to give breaks to the most wealthy and well connected, giveaways and breaks at the same time as the most vulnerable are being hurt in a significant way. And we see attack after attack, cut after cut that hurt the most vulnerable.

My question though is on the finances where the Sask Party clearly wasn't straight with Saskatchewan people and that Premier wasn't straight. Last year during the election, he was claiming that the current fiscal year that he was involved in had a deficit, he was saying at the time 400-and-some million dollars. That wasn't the case. That wasn't the fact.

He came forward just a couple months later with a budget — after about a month and a half, maybe later — had a budget and shared that number. And then just a few weeks later after that, the public accounts rolled in, sort of the real accounting for this.

And of course it wasn't \$400 million in that year; it was \$1.5 billion of deficit, Mr. Speaker. No excuse from the Premier not to have those numbers, the ink would've been dried on the public accounts, but clearly didn't present those to Saskatchewan people.

And further to that, the Sask Party's plan, if you can call it that, is in my hands here, Mr. Speaker. And in 2016-17, the year that's just closed, the Sask Party was saying they were going to run a deficit around \$200 million. Of course the reality is more than snow in October, Mr. Speaker, it was \$1.3 billion deficit, Mr. Speaker. All hidden from Saskatchewan people throughout the year, and then how the government would deal with this.

And I could move forward to 2017-18, Mr. Speaker. Just a year ago we had the Premier saying that there was going to be a \$50 million surplus in this fiscal year. Well the reality, Mr. Speaker, we're dealing with, you know, a deficit somewhere from \$600 million to a billion bucks. Who really knows with this government, Mr. Speaker?

Back to the Premier. He's laid out these numbers. This is what he's ran on. Why wasn't he straight with Saskatchewan people about the financial mess that he's presided over?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the member's preamble is full of . . . Mr. Chair, the member's preamble is full of things that once again need to be corrected and were corrected.

Mr. Chairman, the situation that happened in Saskatchewan with respect to deteriorating revenues happened next door in the province of Alberta, where his party of favour, the New Democratic Party, are in place. What did the NDP party report in terms of their own mid-term versus actual budgets throughout these last number of years? Well they reported ballooning deficits.

The numbers changed. The numbers change when oil prices remain stubbornly low when all the forecasters are saying they won't do that. You see, they do that regardless of whether it's NDP, Alberta or Saskatchewan Party, Saskatchewan.

And so I wonder if he would characterize Premier Notley's government as having not been straight with the people of Alberta. I don't think he would. I think there he would probably recognize, I hope that he would recognize the fact that commodity prices have stayed lower longer. I think for him to just dismiss the fact that there was a quarter billion dollar crop insurance claim that we didn't budget for, over and above average claims, that he would dismiss that as somehow the fault of government and management practice, I think, is pretty transparent as well.

But it's interesting in his preamble, my friend, the interim Leader of the NDP, took another run at corporate income tax reductions in this budget. And we have made reductions in business income taxes in Saskatchewan. Business income taxes were reduced in this province by the members opposite when they were in government, and they did that to keep pace with what was going on in neighbouring provinces in part.

Mr. Chairman, I can share with members of the House that since then in the province of Alberta and the province of BC

have moved to lower. Now the NDP next door have moved higher, but not in British Columbia. And you know, it's interesting: the Finance minister read quotes from . . . The member from Saskatoon Centre asked this very question, railed against the government's budget for reducing corporate income taxes. And the Minister of Finance was able to quote from just 2006, when the NDP reduced corporate income taxes and said, "But I want to highlight . . ." This is what the member said then, Saskatoon Centre:

But I want to highlight some of those of particular interest to my neighbours and the community downtown. The first of course would be the business tax cuts. These are significant, but I believe the plan as laid out by Jack Vicq and his commission is sound, and clearly the time is right for us to make this investment. It is clear that businesses see this initiative as an opportunity to invest here in our province, creating jobs and opportunities and as well ensuring that wages and benefits are competitive.

That's what he said then, when it was the NDP that reduced corporate income taxes in their plan. That's what the member who asked the question of the Finance minister said.

But there's more, Mr. Chair. The current House Leader for the NDP, who was also a minister of the Crown in the NDP government, here's what he had to say about the same corporate income taxes that he just took a broadside at — and you did. You do that in preambles all the time. You take a run at tax cuts for the rich, tax cuts for the big companies. Well Mr. Chair, my friend across the way should remember what he and his party said in 2006. Here's what then NDP member of the government, now NDP Opposition House Leader, said about corporate income tax cuts:

Now one of the main planks in this budget, Mr. Speaker, was cutting business taxes and other measures to stimulate the economy, to sharpen our competitive edge. Business tax cuts will grow the economy . . .

This is what the NDP said, just a few years ago when they were doing it:

Business tax cuts will grow the economy by attracting and stimulating capital investment and creating jobs and job opportunities for young people . . . In 2006-07 these cuts will result in a \$95.3 million business tax cut to improve Saskatchewan's competitiveness.

Ninety-five million dollars in cuts for the big multinationals and the rich that you always decry in this House. That's what you did when you were in government. That's what they did. This particular plan is three years and \$60 million, I think.

**An Hon. Member:** — Eighteen million this year.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Eighteen million dollars. So, Mr. Chairman, I mean it's a good debate. I don't think you can have it both ways though. I don't think you can say in government that when you cut business taxes, it creates jobs, when you're the government and you want to cut business taxes. But then when in you're in opposition you think, well we'll make a little politics. We'll do a little class politicking now. We'll split

companies from employees, and maybe middle from lower classes.

Well, Mr. Chairman, you can't have it both ways. You can't use business taxes that way: on one hand, when in government, that it's good; and on the other hand that it's discriminatory against working people or poor people, Mr. Chairman.

You know, I know members opposite have . . . Because maybe because of their numbers there's not perhaps been a great expectation that they would come up with policies, but I know the member from Saskatoon Centre in committee has been asking ministers if they've seen the latest polls. I'm sure he's referencing the fact that, you know, even though they're not even . . . well that the NDP have made some improvements in the polls, to their credit.

So you know what I think, Mr. Chair? There should be an expectation then on the part of the people of this province that we would get more than just criticism and more than just sort of flip-flopping, but arguing both sides of the same question from a party that purports to be one that's going to be campaigning in about three and a half years to form the government, Mr. Chairman.

I invite the member opposite to clarify his position on business tax cuts, and I look forward to his answer.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I'd appreciate more direct responses to the questions so we don't have someone ragging the puck throughout this time here today.

I guess just to that, you know, to the tax commission that spoke to those changes, this has to be done within fiscal capacity and within balance. And those changes were brought forward to, certainly as part of a package, to grow an economy but done so with surpluses, Mr. Speaker.

And I'll just quote from the actual business tax review committee. A common message was that any recommendations must remain within the province's fiscal capacity. This is important for the Premier who runs deficit after deficit after deficit: should the province's fiscal capacity improve, business tax competitiveness should not be achieved through a return to deficits.

My question to the Premier is, when did he decide that he was going to increase taxes on people and families?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well this is very interesting, Mr. Chair, because now the NDPs say, well of course we supported corporate income tax reductions when there was financial capacity to do it. The next year, here it is, the NDP budget the next year after their corporate income taxes: summary financial deficit, \$701 million.

Why didn't they go back then and increase corporate income taxes? I mean this is their whole argument: well we did it then because the province could afford to do it. And then the next year — and he's talking about deficit — the next year in '07 when things are actually starting to improve, that year they ran a \$700 million deficit. They were, the year before, sitting on a mountain of money. And in that budget, by the way, I think

there was layoffs. There was program cuts. And even despite that, there's a \$700 million deficit.

[15:30]

Mr. Chair, with respect to the direct . . . It's interesting to watch members opposite when they were presented with some of the facts where the rhetoric doesn't jibe, Mr. Chairman. But I would just say this as to the direct question. There was so many decision points in this budget that were obviously very, very difficult, that were not taken lightly by members on this side of the House. And one of them was the changes in taxes that were needed. We knew that after several years, now three years of reduced resource revenue, that we simply couldn't wait any longer to begin to do what governments in the past in this province, including ours, should have been doing — well, since oil was found — and that is to move off of a dependence on resource revenue, to move off of royalties, a dependence on royalties that this province has relied on, notwithstanding who the government happens to be.

And to do that, Mr. Chair, when royalties are low meant shifting towards other taxes. We did what economists would advise and what they have lauded since the budget, which was to make the difficult choice to move in part to consumption and away from taxes on productivity — taxes on investment like the member decried or supported when he was in government, business taxes, and also taxes on Saskatchewan families — towards taxes on consumption. And there is a request for more money here from Saskatchewan people. And you know, Mr. Chair, that's not easy. It's not something that we wanted to do at all, obviously.

But here's where we were at least somewhat reinforced, I think, in the decision to do it, and that is that even after . . . We've been cutting taxes for eight years, Mr. Chair, almost every tax you can think of. You know, members opposite often ask where were did all the money go? Well 6 billion of it went to reducing taxes for Saskatchewan families and farmers and businesses. Six billion dollars is the cumulative number and, by the way, that's still the number today, even after the taxes have increased in this budget.

So there are 6 billion fewer tax dollars being collected by our government than yours, than members opposite when they were in power, even with this year's budget. Mr. Chair, I want to point out that a single person with a 40,000 . . . Yes, without equalization payments which members opposite used often in their budgeting. A single person with a \$40,000 income will still pay 749 less than they did in 2007, combining both income and PST. A family of four . . . Well they laugh at that. They laugh at that.

You know, the member for Saskatoon Centre, I think he's been an articulate advocate for low-income people in this province, to his credit. Well, Mr. Chairman, he should know then that because of our tax reductions, 112,000 low-income people, they don't pay income tax at all in Saskatchewan anymore. They pay zero income tax. You, when you were in office you taxed them — same speeches, but you taxed them. Now they're off the tax roll completely. A family of four with \$75,000 income will pay \$1,886 less than they did in '07. That's a 31 per cent reduction, even with the increases.

The member asked about when did we decide to increase taxes. Well I tell you what, Mr. Chairman, had we not made all of this progress on taxes, dropped low-income people off the tax rolls, reduced taxes for families and farms through the EPT [education property tax] and businesses through the small business rate, I don't think we could have possibly made that decision.

We want there to be lower taxes now than when we started — significantly lower taxes now than when we began. We want the story for Saskatchewan's economy to be built on competitiveness. And it still is, Mr. Chairman, because when this budget's fully implemented we'll have the lowest manufacturing tax rate in the country by far. We'll have the lowest business income tax rate in the country, Mr. Chairman. We'll have among the lowest income taxes in Canada. And even with the PST changes we've made we will have the lowest PST of any province that has one in Canada.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — You know, Mr. Chair, he certainly didn't answer the question. The question was, when did he learn he was going to hike taxes on families and people? And why children's clothes?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — All of those decisions were made at budget finalization. All the options were canvassed through the process as they are with respect to a process the members will know well, called a call for estimates. Begins about mid-year, prior to the budgeting year, and every option's considered even as targets are set. Final decisions, though, are made at cabinet finalization which occurs in February.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — It's not believable, of course, that the financial picture wasn't known long before. Why wasn't the Premier of Saskatchewan straight with Saskatchewan people? Why didn't he run on the kinds of tax changes and tax hikes that he's brought to the people of the province?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Chair, he's talking about two different budget years. If he's trying to say that we campaigned knowing that we would increase taxes, that's just absolutely wrong.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Yes, there was a by-election in there too that would have provided a chance point to clarify. Just going back to sort of being, you know, correct by way of the facts with the finances, last year the Premier of course, as I say, ran through an election saying that the deficit was \$400 million for that year. Then he went into budget on June 1 of last year. Presented a budget, making claims at that point. But at that point the fiscal year would have closed on March 31st. The ink was dried. The reality for government would have been known.

It was in the dead of summer, just about six weeks later I think, on July, maybe July 14th or so, that it was revealed by the Public Accounts that this government clearly wasn't straight with Saskatchewan people, not just in the election but in the budget that they presented on the floor of this Assembly just six weeks prior. And not often, in some small way . . . that instead of \$400-and-some million of deficit, that it was a deficit of \$1.5 billion. How does the Premier explain that? How can he defend that?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Chair, first of all, the member

commented on the by-election. I'm not sure where he was, but during the by-election, I indicated that everything was on the table, including tax changes. Well he just shook his head. I mean, it was in the SUMA speech, and then it was in the SARM speech.

And I'm pretty sure my comments probably helped the guy behind him get elected in the first place because I don't think they were very helpful to our candidate because we were being very transparent with the people of the province. We were talking about how serious it was, and how . . . And I remember, by the way, grants-in-lieu being part of that discussion as well. They like to point out that it wasn't. Well it's certainly . . . He's shaking his head. Mr. Chairman, I get quite a kick out of that. I can share with him the speech transcript. Well but I don't think he'd believe that either because it doesn't fit his narrative, Mr. Chair.

But the truth is that, unfortunately, we had to share with Saskatchewan people, and did want to at SUMA and SARM and at the press conferences that followed, that things were very serious and that we were prepared to consider everything, including tax measures, including tax measures as a result of the budget, including grants-in-lieu specifically mentioned at SUMA as well. I've heard the . . . and seen the transcript.

Now, Mr. Chair, with respect to his question on the Public Accounts report, I'm assuming he's referring to the audited financial statements that Public Accounts Committee considers because they're two different things. So if he's referring to the audited financial statements, I think it's fair to say that in the number, and he's asking about why the number changed, we were noting the \$800 million change in reporting pension, 845 million. Here's the press release from July 22nd, 2016.

And now the member is trying to portray this as some sort of, well you didn't . . . you weren't straight with people about the state of the finances. Mr. Chairman, it talks about the \$675 million deficit when combined with a '15-16 pension adjustment of 845 million results in a \$1.52 billion total deficit. That's in the press release. So I don't know how you could characterize that as being hidden.

And would also point this out, Mr. Chair. The budget adjustment, I'd ask members opposite to consider: has that actually affected delivery of government services, money in and money out, the old General Revenue Fund, for example, we used to use?

We use summary financial statements now in the province. Auditors have asked us to do it. When we were in opposition we wanted the government to do it. When they were in opposition they wanted our government to move towards it. Auditors across the country have told their governments to do it.

And it's interesting what we have now in Canada. I hope we have a debate about it sometime again in Canada with the auditing community because I'm not sure it's as transparent as it could be for people to know, well what's going on actually in the General Revenue Fund of government, the operating money for government, money in and money out.

But with summaries, which we have — and we will continue to have that one set of books — we note every change, even an investment change, a pension change. That doesn't affect government programming at all. It doesn't affect the general revenues of government at all. In fact that pension change could turn around on an interest rate. Couple of basis points on Bay Street or Wall Street and we could be looking at a surplus even though the actual GRF of the budget didn't change, or didn't change materially.

But he asked the question, what's the difference? Why the discrepancy? It's right here in a press release we issued. There's a huge pension adjustment. It reflects an entry, an important entry to record a change in status that wasn't necessarily material unless everyone retired at the same time or the government became insolvent and had to pay out all its pensions.

It was 800-and-some million dollars. There's noted here, 845 on top of what we reported, the 675 deficit at the time, to get us to the number the member's referring to.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, we're dealing with the kind of utter nonsense that Saskatchewan people are starting to recognize, and for that Premier to pretend somehow that he was straight with Saskatchewan people, whether in the last budget or the last election or even this last by-election — and somehow he references our cities and our towns and our villages for which he ripped up agreements with, Mr. Speaker — just isn't on.

And he can make all the noise that he wants, but I'd urge him to listen to some of his members, his MLAs, that I suspect are listening to mayors throughout their respective communities on that one.

As for his comments around the public accounts that rolled out, the whole point is the public accounts comes out through the Provincial Comptroller. What we should be able to expect and trust is a real portrayal of the finances from the Premier and the Finance minister on the floor of this Assembly. And it's beyond belief that this government somehow didn't know the picture when they presented things on June 1 in this Assembly last year, all knowing that the ink had dried on the fiscal year by March 31st already at that point. And of course they were busted when the Provincial Auditor or the provincial comptroller released the true picture.

But I want to move along because the Premier's not answering much here. And my question to the Premier is, why would he tax children's clothes?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chair, this is one of those difficult decisions that I referenced earlier we made when we've expanded the PST in two areas where it didn't previously apply. It was difficult for us because we had actually improved the tax exemption from what members opposite had in place by expanding the age limit. I think it ended at 14 years with members opposite, and we had extended it to 18.

We looked at what some other provinces are doing. There is about four other provinces, I think, who've moved away or do not have such an exemption, Mr. Chair. We also wanted to

make sure there was protection for people, families at the low-income level who would now potentially face this tax on children's clothing.

And so, Mr. Chairman, we moved to increase the low-income tax credit, which is especially meant to offset increases in the PST. And I think we increased it by over a third . . . by 41 per cent, such that there needs to be now 6,000 . . . \$5,800 worth of taxable purchases bought by a low-income person before their low-income tax credit would be used up, which I think is still a significant support, effectively a tax exemption for those purchases that are PST applicable. We have significantly increased the low-income tax credit, but certainly this was not an easy decision to take.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — It might not have been easy, Mr. Chair, but he made it. He made the choice at the same time as he's giving a break of \$60 million with full commitment to the corporations, Mr. Speaker, that he's going to hike taxes on clothing by \$7 million which every single family pays. The low-income tax credit changes that he references come nowhere close to covering those increases, Mr. Speaker. To the corporate tax cut, who called for that tax cut?

[15:45]

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, there he went again in his preamble with a little drive-by of people that paid a business income tax saying that that's a giveaway to corporations, but when the NDP do it, it's good economic policy. When the NDP do it, it's good for jobs and good for the investment community. And their business income tax cuts were \$95 million fully implemented on a much smaller economy, much smaller than the \$52 million fully implemented in this plan which will keep us competitive and will keep this province strong.

I would highlight for everybody watching today to count every single time that member takes a run at people in the business sector who create jobs; talks about the \$60 million giveaway to them, basically disparaging what they do, the jobs they create; and remember when they count each time he does it, when they were in office, when they were government, they called those same measures job creating. They said they were good for an economy.

I hope anybody watching — I'm not sure how many there might be, but anybody watching — will count each moment like that when members opposite take their little drive-by. They don't when they're in the gallery, when they're here for the bypass safety day. They don't take their shots then, but when they're here without the galleries full, the situation changes. And I think that's . . . I don't know why. I'll let them debate it.

Mr. Chairman, governments from time to time take difficult decisions. We certainly did in this budget, and sometimes it's a decision to increase the PST base. I remember as an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] in 2000 when the budget was tabled by the NDP, Mr. Chairman, they took some difficult choices. They decided to expand the PST to include repair services, computer services, non-prescription drugs, bedding plants, trees, shrubs, pet food, dry cleaning, vet fees, security and investigative services, collection services, telephone answering services, Mr. Chairman. I don't expect those would

have been easy decisions as this one was not, but sometimes you decide to . . . You make the decisions to expand the PST base.

Well, Mr. Chairman, we've made other decisions. Other decisions that we didn't mention in an election campaign. We didn't say in the 2007 election campaign that we would increase the basic exemption and cut taxes for low-income families to such a great extent that 114,000 low-income people in this province wouldn't pay any taxes at all. And that's the status today.

We didn't campaign on massive increases to the personal basic exemptions in this province and the per-child exemptions that exist to ensure that a family of four in Saskatchewan can earn more in this province, before paying dime one in provincial tax, than any other province in Canada. We didn't campaign on that either, but circumstances allowed for this government to make fundamental changes in how we treat low-income families and families from a tax perspective.

We didn't campaign on increasing the seniors' income assistance program. This is a program that exists for low-income seniors, and it's germane to the question because those seniors would be facing the implications of the PST changes the minister is criticizing.

Well, Mr. Chairman, when we took office we decided to increase that seniors' income assistance plan. And then in the next year we decided to increase it again. And then when we could afford to, we increased it again and I think now it's up threefold from what it was. When members opposite, our social democratic friends who always talk about low-income people and seniors, but when they have a chance in government including when they're sitting on some significant surpluses, they don't act. Sixteen years without an increase to the seniors' income assistance plan. Well we didn't campaign on changes to that either, but we did them. We did them because we knew it was the right thing to do, and by the way, those changes, those increases in that support for seniors were protected in this very, very difficult budget.

So, Mr. Chairman, I would end by saying that the PST changes are offset for low-income people by a 41 per cent increase in the low-income tax credit, which those families can apply for to offset increased costs they might have, Mr. Chair. And the Minister of Finance has pointed out that almost \$5,800 in purchases would be required before you even use up that kind of support. Mr. Chairman, it doesn't make the decision any easier, but we wanted to make sure that those who are most vulnerable would be protected.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — You know, Mr. Speaker, it's hard at times to stand here and kind of listen to the portrayal that we hear from the Premier. Saskatchewan families know the reality, and economists have crunched the numbers. It's been published that this budget itself it gives breaks for the wealthiest, the most well-connected, the very wealthiest, highest-wage earners in society and breaks for the corporations.

And in fact, the top 10 per cent in Saskatchewan see a zero per cent increase in their taxation. The 50th percentile, right in the middle, see 1 per cent. The bottom 10 per cent though see twice

that, see 100 per cent higher than what the 50th percentile does. And of course, as I say, the richest don't get impacted at all. Those are the changes, those are the choices of this government.

As for the nonsense from the Premier around businesses, this is a Premier who's selling out Saskatchewan businesses on front after front and who's making the very choices in this budget here that will prolong economic recovery and hurt that recovery, Mr. Speaker.

The question was simple. I hope we have a short answer from the Premier. Who urged him to lower the corporate tax rate?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Chairman, I guess former Premier Calvert would've urged the lower corporate income tax. I guess the member for Saskatoon Centre urged reducing corporate income tax. I guess his House Leader, the member for Elphinstone, when he was in government, urged that this was sound government policy. In fact I'll just repeat what they said. He said, who urged, incredibly, who urged corporate income tax cuts?

Here's what his own member said when they did it: "Now one of the main planks . . . [of] this budget, Mr. Speaker, was cutting business taxes and other . . ." They call it business taxes when they're in government, not corporate taxes, because corporations need to be vilified. They call it business taxes. He's pretty careful about that. So did the member for Centre.

Here's what he said. He wanted to know, who gave us advice on this? Well Lorne Calvert said, this is a good way to create jobs. And the member for Regina Elphinstone said, "Now one of the main planks . . . [of] this budget, Mr. Speaker . . ." That's the NDP budget that cut business taxes. He said, ". . . was cutting business taxes and other measures to stimulate the economy, to sharpen our competitive edge."

See when the NDP do it . . . Well the member for Nutana's chatting. When the NDP do it, Mr. Speaker, it's sharpening our competitive edge. When anyone else does it, it's a giveaway to someone's friend, Mr. Chairman. That's why my hon. friends across the way have lacked credibility in election campaign after election campaign. Because it took a few decades, but we've all kind of seen through the two sides of that coin depending on where they sit in the House.

But let's carry on with . . . He asked me the question, who gave me advice to lower corporate income taxes? Well here's what the member, his House Leader, said when he was in government: "Business tax cuts will grow the economy by attracting and stimulating . . ." I mean, I read this already. It should not be lost on my hon. friend. "Business tax cuts will grow the economy by attracting and stimulating capital investment and creating jobs and job opportunities for young people."

And they go on to say in the bottom line, in their actual budget document: "The significance of this reform should have an immediate impact on investor and business attitudes towards Saskatchewan."

Now I don't think that's time limited. The new member for Meewasin said, I think, well that was then. Is there a statute on

limitations on this as efficacious economic policy or something salutary you'd want to do for your economy?

They said in their NDP budget that reducing business taxes . . . the same taxes he's decrying now, asking who urged us to do it:

The significance of this reform should have an immediate impact on investor and business attitudes towards Saskatchewan. Statutory tax rates are the most transparent means of demonstrating the investment "friendliness" of a jurisdiction.

The same guy that he said gave them all that good advice is the guy that gave us the good advice about the corp.

But it's different, you see, because that was when they were in government, and then it's a business tax cut to create jobs. But if someone else does the same thing, why then there's some nefarious motive; then it's all about our friends and vilifying the same businesses that sat up in the gallery a few hours ago.

It's so transparent. It's why, even with this very difficult budget, members have a hard time getting traction politically, because that's not believable. It's just not believable when you say one thing when you're in government and decry the very thing later.

And he would ask, well who else would give us that advice? Well, Mr. Chairman, we had some comments after the budget of economists who would have given us that very same advice. Trevor Tombe is an assistant professor at the University of Calgary and he's a research fellow at The School of Public Policy there. And his partner in work, Blake Shaffer, is a C.D. Howe Institute Fellow-in-Residence. And he noted that, "Saskatchewan swallows . . ." This is what they said:

Saskatchewan swallows the fiscal pill Alberta refuses: Through restraint and strategic tax hikes, Saskatchewan shows how to get off the royalty rollercoaster.

Partially offsetting these tax increases are lower personal and corporate income taxes. Across the board, income tax rates will fall by a half point for all brackets. In 2019, they are set to drop by another half a point.

This is what they say. These are economists. The shift in taxation away from income and towards consumption is what many economists recommend . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member from Meewasin . . . I hope the member from Meewasin, the next leader, gets up and joins the debate, because he wants to comment from his seat. He asked me, he just said to me, who gave you this advice? I just gave a quote from two economists: one at the C.D. Howe Institute, a reasonably well reputed research institute, and another at the University of Calgary School of Public Policy.

And here's what they say again: the shift in taxation away — to my hon. friend from Meewasin — the shift in taxation away from income towards consumption is what many economists recommend. The question then, the answer to my hon. friend's question, where did we get this advice? Well first we heard it from Mr. Calvert and Jack Vicq. Then we heard it from the NDP member for Saskatoon Centre. Then we heard it for the

current NDP member for Regina Elphinstone. But even more importantly, we heard it from bone fide, qualified economists before, during, and after the budget presentation.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — So the report that the Premier's speaking from is the very report that we cited that shows that there's no impact on the wealthiest and that those that get hit hardest are the poorest, Mr. Speaker. And I can assure the Premier of Saskatchewan this, that Premier Calvert would have never advised him to give a break to the corporations at the expense of the poor and the most vulnerable among us, Mr. Speaker.

I guess the question back to the Premier: before hiking taxes and cutting services for the most vulnerable and for families, all so that he could fund his corporate giveaway, what analysis did he do?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Chair, I think my hon. friend needs to remember his political history of his own party a little bit better. He just got up with a little bit of bravado and said what Mr. Calvert would never do. He said he would never cut corporate taxes at the expense of someone else. He cut corporate taxes at a way higher level than this budget does without a single dime of relief in income tax. Does he understand that, Mr. Chair? Does my hon. friend understand that the very corporate income tax cuts that his members supported when they were the government happened without a dime in income tax relief for Saskatchewan families?

This takes a different approach, this budget, Mr. Chairman. This takes the difficult decision to increase the PST, but at the same time, we've increased the low-income tax credit for low-income families. And at the same time, we've decreased income tax for Saskatchewan families — low-, middle-, and high-income families — and we've reduced the taxes on business that NDP members thought was a pretty good idea when they did it. So he's absolutely wrong again.

See, I think there becomes this romanticized, revisionist view of the history of their own party. I think he's quite convinced when he says Lorne Calvert never would have cut corporate taxes at the expense of anyone else. It's exactly what they did in their budget where they did finally do the right thing and reduce business taxes. There was no attendant relief on income tax. There was no increase in the low-income tax credit when the social democrats did it just a few years ago in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We've taken a different approach. We made this difficult choice to expand the base and increase the rate of the PST, but we've increased the low-income tax credit and we're cutting taxes for Saskatchewan families and the Saskatchewan businesses that sustain jobs for those Saskatchewan families.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Chair, you know, the Premier, shortly after introducing this betrayal of a budget, Mr. Speaker, and on this very point around the corporate giveaway, Mr. Speaker, the Premier engaged across the floor and sort of tried to suggest . . . I guess he shared his understanding of the corporate tax cut. And he said, well this is a cut for restaurants and it's a cut for farms, and was saying that in a very, sort of in a broad way. And it was pretty clear on the floor at that point



that the Premier didn't even understand the very measure he had brought forward.

[16:00]

I guess to the Premier: why would he bring forward a budget with a measure like a corporate giveaway when he didn't even understand it? Does he understand it now?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Chair, what the member just said is categorically wrong, and I would reference the fact that he again called it a corporate giveaway. And I'll just track back to the last question, when he asked, who advised you to cut the corporate income tax? Well, Mr. Chairman, I was in a debate just like this with Mr. Calvert when he was the premier and I was the leader of the opposition, and here's what Mr. Calvert said to me:

Well the . . . matter [of the fact] is, Mr. Chair, in this budget [the NDP budget] you will see the largest single cut to business taxation in this province's history. That's what you see in this budget [I'm quoting], to create the competitive environment that we know will draw investment, that we know will create jobs, that we know will create a future for the people of Saskatchewan and the young people of Saskatchewan.

That's what Premier Calvert said to me when I was in that chair and he was in this chair, and that's probably . . . It wouldn't have been the first time I heard that advice, but it was pretty compelling coming from the premier of Saskatchewan. I note for the record though, Mr. Chair, that what Premier Calvert called wise policy — to create the competitive environment that we know will draw investment and create jobs — what he called a policy that will do those things, this leader, interim Leader of the NDP, calls a giveaway.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — It's about balance, about decency. And certainly right now to be giving this break, that's bad fiscal policy, at the expense of everyone else in the province, and at the great expense of the most marginalized and the most vulnerable and families across the province is wrong.

Just back to the point though around the corporate tax rate and the Premier's understanding of the corporate tax change after the budget. At that point he was trying to suggest that this was a change that would impact all farms or small businesses. Has the Premier come to the, I guess the understanding, of course there's a threshold, that it's only those with earnings exceeding \$500,000 that would benefit from the corporate tax rate?

So I'm wondering if he now has an understanding that no, the restaurants that he's hiked the taxes on, that that hit is real for the vast majority of them. Most aren't corporations with earnings beyond 500,000. Same for the vast majority of farms — 80 per cent of farms in Saskatchewan have earnings below \$500,000. So I guess I'm just asking the Premier here at this point in time if he's come to that understanding.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, I want to note for the record that this side of the House also reduced the small business tax rate for the people that would be under that \$500,000 threshold.

And I want to share with my hon. member some good news. Mr. Chairman, the economy of the province of Saskatchewan has changed markedly since they were in power. It's different now, today, and I don't think any government should take credit. I think government can get in the way of it. We saw lessons in that from members opposite when they were in power. And I think governments can also get out of the way of economic growth when it's coming, create the right environment for growth.

But things have changed now, and so there's more businesses than ever in this province that they would have considered small that might be making \$500,000 in taxable income. And some of them might be restaurant chains and other of them might be involved in agriculture, and I don't think . . . It's a challenge and a problem with the NDP's vision of things that they would just assume that there isn't a Saskatchewan-grown business perhaps — maybe in the food business, maybe with a number of outlets, maybe in agriculture — that might not make \$500,000 in taxable income . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well he's asked the question.

Mr. Chairman, the good news is, the good news is that our government in 2011 or '12 reduced the small business tax rate that applies for all. We've also taken measures to reduce the corporate income tax rate. And I would point out again that in my hon. friend's preamble to his question he said, it's all a question of balance. Well when the NDP were in power and they cut the corporate income taxes, when they engaged in a corporate giveaway, as the member just called it now, there was no reduction in personal income taxes. You didn't increase the low-income tax credit to people. It was just the businesses that got that deal, just corporations that got that deal.

Mr. Chairman, if what the member, if what the member is advocating is balance when you cut corporate income taxes, he ought to support the budget because this budget said we are going to reduce those taxes. But we're also going to reduce taxes for families through the income tax, and we're going to significantly increase the low-income tax credit. And we're going to keep whole . . . seniors who have now seen their seniors' income assistance program increase threefold after the NDP sat on that thing for 16 years without so much of a dime as an increase. Yes, I agree. We need balance, Mr. Chairman. We've learned our lesson. We watched the NDP in the past. We didn't see the balance I think that was required that the member says he would advocate. We've tried. We've worked hard to make difficult decisions, but strike that balance with this budget.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, when you hear the words "balance" from the Premier, this Premier, the Sask Party, it's difficult not to take a bit of bait. This is a Premier and the Sask Party that couldn't balance during the best days in Saskatchewan's history, Mr. Speaker, balance the budget, nor the priorities of Saskatchewan people, I should say. And the Premier again shared here that he thinks somehow that there should be a break to the biggest corporations, Mr. Speaker, at the expense of everyone else. And it's just not the right thing to do at this time, Mr. Chair. It's bad fiscal policy.

But as it relates to many, many small businesses within our province, this is a Premier who's imposed a surprise hike on

construction labour, Mr. Speaker, a brand new tax, a brand new tax on something that we need — jobs and investment, really the epitome of a job-killing tax. And so at the same time as there's breaks for some of the biggest corporations, for Saskatchewan small businesses, Mr. Speaker, what it is is a massive hike in their taxes.

And on that front, they look specifically at the job-killing construction tax that the Premier's added. What analysis did he go into on this front? Why wasn't he straight with Saskatchewan people that he was going to impose this tax that will prolong our economic recovery?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, when we first indicated to the people of the province in very public manners that the financial situation was obviously worsening as a result of the quarter billion dollars in unanticipated crop insurance claims and as a result of continued depressed revenues, we indicated in a public forum that everything would be on the table, including not just the PST rate, but what it might be applied to. So that would be the direct answer to the member's question.

It's interesting though. I just want . . . Again you've always got to watch the preamble because he's trying to . . . he'll make some sort of point in the preamble and quickly move away so they don't have to answer for it. We're not going to let him do that today, Mr. Chairman. He's going to have to be accountable for everything he says, not just the questions he asks.

You see, Mr. Chairman, he's trying to characterize several budgets on this side of the House as deficits. And you know, Mr. Chair . . . And you know, Mr. Chairman, it's interesting because the last budget that they were responsible for was 2007-2008. Now that's before we moved to summary financial budgeting in the province. That's when we had a GRF budget only. And actually when we were in government we went with both; we had both for a while. We had GRF and summary.

But, Mr. Chairman, here's what happened. They heralded the 2007-2008 budget as the 14th consecutive balanced budget. That's what they said. It was a \$701 million summary financial statement deficit. But it was . . . They said in the press . . . You know, this is their briefing notes — 14th consecutive balanced budget, but they note a \$700 million summary deficit.

But you took credit for the balanced budget and you got covered as such in terms of the media. Now in the first few years of office, we also went with the GRF. We had a summary financial budget. And in those years — every one of those years — it was balanced on that same reporting basis that the NDP used. Well he's rolling his eyes. It's just . . . It's a problem when they're confronted with the truth, and the truth is right here in black and white. What they call a balanced budget was a 700 — by their own account — a \$700 million summary deficit, Mr. Chairman.

With respect to the changes on the tax side, Mr. Chairman, a couple of points. One, it is also why we balanced off the PST expansion with the income tax, the balance the member was asking for, the income tax changes and the corporate income tax changes. And you know, Mr. Chairman, it's also why we're working hard with respect to the growth plan, which is about

more than just taxes, to ensure that this is the right business environment, that we can create and attract jobs here in Saskatchewan so that we can see the kind of activity incented that would obviously use local contractors.

Mr. Chairman, what would be a real service for construction companies in the province is that if we could get the full-throated support of members opposite for things like the Regina bypass and the 70 per cent of local companies, contractors that are working on that project without kind of the drive-by rhetoric that we hear on that project every single day.

There's more than one way for a government to provide construction job incentives and one of them is through infrastructure. And, Mr. Chair, I can tell members of the House that since 2007, we've invested about \$20 billion in infrastructure builds, a huge increase over what was here, as we have worked through the Crowns to improve the Crown corporation infrastructure, as we have implemented record highways budgets and a big highways budget again this year, and as we have worked with the local municipalities on major infrastructure expansion. We're going to continue to do that. It's part of our growth plan and it's another way to assist the construction industry to be sustainable and healthy in Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Chair, again it's . . . I guess this is why we're in this mess. We have a Premier who's silver-tongued, no doubt, but balancing the books or delivering for Saskatchewan people is a different story.

And you know, if you look . . . I mean at the end of the day we have a Premier that's presided over massive debt increase in the province. So I'm not going to belabour his record. Actually Saskatchewan people, who are pretty common sense, who come from the farm, who operate businesses, who operate households, see the kind of budgets that this Premier's presented for what they are. But just as a point, this Premier here, from just 2011, so . . . Or actually let's take a look here and make sure we're doing this . . . 2013. I can go back further, and it makes the picture worse for him. But in 2013 until now has actually doubled the debt, doubled the debt in the province of Saskatchewan from \$9.4 billion to \$18.2 billion, and it just continues to climb. Of course, didn't save a dime.

And even the, you know, the Premier's attempt to sort of portray what he inherited as something different than what it was is really actually sad, Mr. Speaker. And it's sad that he wouldn't be more humble and more respectful of what he actually received, and that was surpluses that were in place, rainy day funds that were in place, all of course spent and exhausted by this Premier.

Just back to the construction, the change here, the job-killing tax on construction in the province, I guess the question is, how much does he plan to generate from it? We know of course it's going to slow investment, slow job creation, slow economic recovery, but how much in this short-sighted sort of economic way that he's going at this does he think he's going to increase? What analysis does he have and will he table it?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chair, he's trying to say that I'm trying to, you know, that I wasn't being forthcoming about the

state of the last NDP budget. I was reading from the NDP backgrounder and it goes to say this, “The Fiscal Stabilization Fund.” He mentioned the rainy day fund in his question. The NDP Fiscal Stabilization Fund, here’s what their budget notes say about their last budget, “There’s a \$510 million draw from the FSF [that’s the rainy day fund] to help balance the budget.”

In 2007-08 when things are pretty robust, that’s a half a billion dollar drawdown on the rainy day fund when it wasn’t raining. There weren’t forest fires. There weren’t floods, Mr. Chairman. There weren’t three sustained years of dramatically lower commodity prices, 50 per cent off of their highs, Mr. Chairman. So I would make, you know, I would make that point.

I would also point out with respect to the finances of the budget and the debt issue that he again quickly referenced in his preamble, Mr. Chairman, the Crown corporations continue to borrow for long-term infrastructure and we have . . . [inaudible] . . . sanctioned that. Because when we came to power, we recognized the huge infrastructure deficit in our Crowns, the Crowns that members opposite purport to defend, huge infrastructure deficits at SaskPower, huge infrastructure deficits at SaskEnergy and SaskTel, and then generally the infrastructure deficit around the province.

And so like a business or a family when you’re making 20-, 30-, 40-year investments, typically you don’t cash flow it. Those companies, if they were in the private sector, they’d finance them as they did when members opposite were in power, but the members opposite just wouldn’t sanction the infrastructure investments that the Crowns would have, I’m sure, been . . . [inaudible] . . . them they needed.

Now there’s another kind of debt that government has and that’s operating debt. And that’s the kind of debt that unfortunately is being impacted by this budget. That’s the kind of, let’s say, sort of a credit card debt in a family. You could have a mortgage. That’s the debt I’ve just referred to that most families are going to have for a long-term asset. That’s the debt that’s been increasing in the province of Saskatchewan. The member says debt’s gone up. That is the debt that’s gone up.

[16:15]

As we build major infrastructure projects — bridges and bypasses and the Saskatchewan hospital and a long-term care facility — and tried to fill the infrastructure deficit hole that members left at SaskPower, those long-term capital investments have been made through financing and the Crowns and in government, as families and businesses would do with long-term costs.

But there’s another kind of debt. That’s the operating debt, Mr. Chairman. That’s when you’re having to borrow just to cover monthly costs, and you know, I’ve referred to it in the past as sort of a credit card. Well, Mr. Chairman, even with these last two budgets where we have seen deficits, I can report to the House that the member is wrong. Operating debt in the province is still down 15 per cent over what members left behind.

So the operating debt of Saskatchewan, the credit card left behind by members opposite, is still 15 per cent less. Well they don’t like this much. It’s 15 per cent less than what it was when

they left it, even though, even though they took a half a billion dollars from the rainy day fund, when it wasn’t rainy, to balance their budget. It might have been because it was an election year, but I think the people of the province saw through that.

Mr. Chair, the specific answer to the question is 344 this year, 498 annualized.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Chair, I mean it’s rather outrageous. This is the Premier of Saskatchewan asserting certain portrayals that just are anything but accurate. And I guess it’s why the Premier just doesn’t have any credibility on these files anymore, Mr. Chair. You know, this is a . . . And so he’s talking about a document that would have maybe been presented on budget day, but what he’s failing to talk about is the reality and what actually happened that year. And I guess that makes sense because this is a Premier who gets up year after year in budget time and pretends somehow that he’s got a balanced budget. And of course as the ink rolls in and the mismanagement grows and they do a few deals with some buddies, the reality is they’re in deficit again, Mr. Speaker, and the debt continues to grow.

Now there’s a reason why, when the Sask Party came into power, that there was a healthy financial position. I guess I’d just go back to the Premier . . . I’m not going to spend a whole bunch of time on 2007 and ’08, but the budget that he speaks here, that was presented at the end of the day, the reality that year was that it left a surplus in the summary financial statements — which I know we took some time to explain to the Premier — of \$1.8 billion. So there’s the presentation on budget day, and then there’s the reality. That’s what this Premier inherited, Mr. Speaker. Why would the Premier of Saskatchewan, at this stage of his career, at this stage of his tenure, try to pretend otherwise?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chair, I want to thank my hon. friend. He helps make my point because the budget that was tabled, their NDP budget, showed a \$700 million deficit. And then what happened throughout the year to change things so dramatically? Did oil prices go up? Yes. Did potash prices go through the roof? Yes. Did the government know that was going to happen when they tabled their budget? No.

Mr. Chairman, does the hon. member not believe that the opposite can happen? For three years, for a sustained period of time, even though forecasters aren’t predicting it, that if it can go up without prediction or forecast, it might do the same or at least stay down without a supporting forecast. Does he not understand that the opposite could be true as well? That when a budget is presented, you use the best forecast from the private sector that you have. That they had, that were way off in ’07-’08, to the benefit of the province later on, but were way off. Does he not believe the same can happen? Or does he want to ascribe all of this to some sort of nefarious intent on the part of the government, on part of members here?

Mr. Chairman, the truth of the matter is, as I have highlighted, we built budget forecasts based on what private forecasters tell us to say. It’s accumulated and aggregated by the Ministry of the Economy, the Energy and Resources folks, just as it was when members opposite were in power and missed the numbers so badly in ’07 and ’08. Missed it, not their fault . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well, well yes. He’s saying, well that’s . . .

Well he's finally listening. He goes, yes, but the other way. That's exactly the point. So if he's saying it can happen that way, I wonder if he would agree that it might happen the other way too? Except this one's for three years, when no forecasters are predicting it's going to strengthen. It's going to strengthen, and it doesn't.

And so we've said, how about we just set aside, move away from royalty revenues in the province of Saskatchewan. How about we move away from a reliance on those resources. It will take tough decisions to do it on the expenditure side and on the revenue side, but it will be worth it. It'll be worth it for future generations who will thank members of this House. I hope they'll thank all members of this House for making the tough decisions to get us off that roller coaster.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — So two different scenarios there. One, when you're setting a budget, you sort of set a realistic and a safe assumption, and then you have a better performance. That's sort of what Saskatchewan people do. That's what they do on the farm. That's what they do on the farm. That's what they do in business if you're going to have some success in the business. That's what you're going to do as a household. Of course the opposite is what this Premier's always done.

To the broken promise, the ripped-up contracts with our cities and towns and villages, that came as a complete surprise that blindsided our cities and towns. And of course this happening at the same time as the biggest corporations are getting a \$60 million break when fully implemented. My question to the Premier: how does he think it's fair or right? These are contracts that have been in place with our cities, our towns, and our villages. The impacts are real. They're hard on those municipalities, those that have put those budgets together, and they're hard on people and families through property taxes. How does he think it's right or fair to rip up those contracts, let alone with no warning and no consultation?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Chairman, the budget had a number of difficult decisions to make. We decided that the municipal sector should share in about 3 per cent of the overall resource revenue decline. The minister corrects me — it's two and a half per cent.

We indicated to SUMA and SARM that we wanted to preserve the overall municipal revenue-sharing arrangement, which has been greatly improved over the last number of years since the government implemented that new formula together with those municipalities.

Mr. Chair, I said at SUMA and SARM that everything would be on the table, including grants-in-lieu. We have undertaken this difficult decision. Grants-in-lieu do not affect every municipality, as members well know. There are more contracts at SaskPower than there are at SaskEnergy. They all had termination clauses . . . most of them, sorry, had termination clauses. And Mr. Chairman, this decision was taken.

And even after that, even after that decision, it's important to note that our cities today are getting 158 per cent more in revenue sharing than they did when members opposite had the chance to do more than just talk about something. Municipalities, rural municipalities are getting 72.7 million, or

54 per cent more than they did in 2007. And I remember going to SARM and SUMA both when they simply wanted not just clarity and the ability to plan, but they wanted a bit more support. And it was falling on deaf ears, even though members opposite like to talk about their management and their support for the municipal sector.

Well, that changed when a new formula was implemented, and so the GIL [grant-in-lieu] issue is a difficult one, but it needs to be also considered in the overall context, and that is that cities are getting 158 per cent more money today than they did before, even with this change. And RMs [rural municipality] are getting 54.5 per cent more than they did in 2007, even with this change. And the North is getting almost 100 per cent increase in funding, even with the changes that have been referenced, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — So anyways, the Premier, for him to pretend somehow that he levelled with cities and towns and villages across the province is just not on, and they know that. We don't have to pretend otherwise. It's been covered in every front page of the papers all across the province, and our locally elected councils have communicated very clearly how outraged and surprised they were with this cut that's unfair, that's damaging, and has big costs for people and families.

It also has a cost for our Crown corporations. Of course this Premier, he's not somehow cancelling these and keeping these dollars back in our Crowns and somehow trying to keep rates low. He's actually just flowing them through to pay for whatever is a priority in his budget. I guess what are priorities are the wealthy and well connected, Mr. Speaker, and again at the expense of our cities and towns.

I just want to be clear with the Premier on this point. Is he actually suggesting though that . . . I mean this cut is wrong. Ripping up contracts is wrong. The impacts are harsh, and the choice is wrong. But does he actually feel that he was straight with our cities and towns on this front?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, we wanted to make sure that municipalities knew that everything was on the table. Twice grants-in-lieu were mentioned, but consider this: that message was delivered November 18th, 2016 at a meeting with the City Mayors' Caucus; December 14th, 2016, a meeting with the SUMA executive; January 13th with the mayor of Regina; later that month with a caucus meeting with the Saskatoon mayor and council, Mr. Chair; February 6th, and when I spoke to SUMA February 7th. As a result of that comment, ministers were echoing the same thing. Mr. Chair, the same happened in March with SARM. We signalled as early as November that everything was on the table.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I guess that's why SUMA, the representation of our towns and our cities and our villages, said that they're outraged. That's why they said they're surprised. That's why as we sat down with mayors in, you know, Melville, Yorkton, North Battleford, all across the province, why they shared the devastating impacts on their budgets.

But moving along to another area where this Premier certainly hasn't been straight to Saskatchewan people, an area that represents a major betrayal is his privatization schemes of our

Crown corporations. He brought forward Bill 40 in this legislative . . . well I guess in this session, and he's forced it through Royal Assent. My question to the Premier is, what sparked this idea? What was the genesis for this bill?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, the NDP passed the Crown protection Act without defining what privatization was. That Act was supposedly all about privatization and preventing it from happening. And so we decided that we should probably have a definition for privatization, as is the case and the practice with most pieces of legislation where the most material elements of it also are accompanied by a definition.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — It doesn't hold water. The Premier stood in this Assembly and voted for that very bill, the Crown protection Act in 2004. Then he pledged and swore to not sell off the Crowns in 2007 and did the same in 2011, and of course did the same thing in 2016. And you know, Saskatchewan people still expect and value and deserve someone to be straight with them. So my question to the Premier stands. What was the genesis? What caused them to act to create this bill that will allow for the privatization of up to 49 per cent of all of our Crown corporations?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chair, I just answered the question, and moreover the bill prevents privatization, which is what we campaigned on.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — You know, these might be cute answers, semantic games with the few that sit with them over there, Mr. Speaker, but they're not. They're not cute for the people of Saskatchewan who understand the value in these Crown corporations, who took that Premier at his word. This is a dramatic change and a betrayal of Saskatchewan people that allows the sell-off of up to 49 per cent of all of our Crown corporations from a Premier who promised to protect and certainly not to privatize our Crowns. To the Premier: where does he get this mandate?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chair, I answered the question. We've campaigned on a position of not privatizing the Crowns that are listed in the Crown protection Act save for the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority, those liquor stores that we campaigned that we would move into the private sector, Mr. Chairman. And that's exactly what Bill 40 will do. Bill 40 protects in perpetuity the Crown corporations that are listed in the Act. There are no other changes to the Crown corporation protection Act, which is also what we campaigned on.

And I find it more than passing curious that what the hon. member calls semantics now weren't semantics when the NDP ascribed to the same things when they were in government. You see because, Mr. Chairman, I ran in the elections since '99 and I remember the NDP campaigning on not privatizing any Crowns. But we know that they were thinking about partnerships where equity would change — not a majority perhaps, but equity would change.

Not long in this House, I mentioned the fact that in 2000, then Premier Romanow said, "We believe SaskTel must expand its business and look at partnering where it makes sense for the provision of improved services." The headline of that article in

the *Leader-Post*, by the way, was, "SaskTel may start looking for a partner."

Well why is the House Leader shaking his head? He was here then. Did he support that? Did he support that? You know what, Mr. Chairman? What's also getting frustrating is that members would say one thing when they're in government and another thing when they're in . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well he's pretty upset because he supported partnerships when he was on the government side, and now because he thinks he can score political points he's going to talk from his seat, Mr. Chairman. I encourage him to get up in the debate if the interim leader will help him because we have a few quotes from him about this very issue and things like corporate income taxes as well.

[16:30]

Here's what the NDP premier said: "We believe SaskTel must expand its business and look at partnering where it makes sense for the provision of improved services."

Oh, but he goes on. He says more: "But he said the government would consider a swap of shares with a partner under the right circumstances." He goes on in his quote, "Supposing that they had some great Internet scheme or idea which would be both a good thing for the people of Saskatchewan and profitable for SaskTel."

But I guess when the NDP premier says that, that a partnership that doesn't lose more than 50 per cent control of the Crown, that's not privatization. But when anyone else wants to do it, then it's privatization. Is that right? Is that why there is such a dearth in credibility for members opposite on this issue and on so many other issues?

What about SaskEnergy? What about SaskEnergy? What year was this? Oh, February 2003. Well the member for Saskatoon Centre was here, I think, in 2003. Or maybe not. Not sure. Certainly the member for Regina Elphinstone was here, and we know the member for Athabasca was here because he was mostly talking from his seat then too as he does now.

In 2003 these are the speaking points for SaskEnergy, the NDP talking points entitled "Is the government planning to sell TransGas?" "Is the government planning to sell TransGas?" Here are the talking points:

TransGas is a strong, well-run, profitable business that delivers competitive rates to customers. We're always ready and willing to listen to anyone who is interested in partnering with us . . .

You know, the member for Elphinstone, he might want to stop yipping from his seat and listen to this because the question is, the question is why, for example, why is it true that when the NDP were planning a partnership that it wasn't privatization, but now it is privatization? Oh, it's quite a chorus over there, Mr. Chairman. Here's what the NDP talking points go on to say on SaskEnergy, on TransGas. This is the NDP:

We're always ready and willing to listen to anyone who is interested in partnering with us in growing Saskatchewan's energy industry. If and when such a business arrangement

is finalized, we will announce it.

By the way, not before. They wouldn't disclose that they were meeting with TransCanada Pipelines, which they were. Who were the other companies that they were meeting with? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . What's that? Atco, Enbridge. They wouldn't disclose they were meeting with them because it says in the talking points, "If and when such a business arrangement is finalized, then we will announce it." And then he says, and then the NDP talking points go on to say:

Any business arrangement we undertake will have two conditions. [This is the good part.] First, it will grow this company and keep jobs in Saskatchewan. Secondly, it will keep control of TransGas in the hands of its owner, the people of Saskatchewan.

Yes or no to the NDP leader, the interim leader: is what I just read privatization? Is what I just read privatizing TransGas? You need to answer this question because if your answer is no, it's not privatizing TransGas, then your whole argument of Bill 40 falls apart, you see, because Bill 40 allows us as a government to do exactly what the NDP were doing when they called it anything but privatization.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — So, Mr. Chair, speaking of a dearth of credibility? Mr. Speaker, that sort of bizarre display from the Premier of Saskatchewan. And you know, observing the devotion of this Premier over the last number of years has really been something, someone who used to work pretty hard to sort of portray himself as a statesman, who's day after day nothing more than a stuntman in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

**The Chair:** — I would . . . Order. I would caution the Leader of the Opposition to choose his words carefully.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I'll remind the Premier as well that Premier Romanow and the government of the time were cleaning up the incredible mess and the betrayal of, well, the government that he carried the calculator for, Mr. Speaker: the Devine conservatives of the '80s. And that they protected, they protected our Crowns and that Premier Calvert and the government of that time protected our Crown corporations, expanded our Crown corporations, and that in 2004, of course, this Premier voted for the Crown protection Act.

This Premier has no mandate to bring forward this bill. He did run on his bill around the changes to the liquor stores. He didn't run on selling off up to 49 per cent of all of our Crown corporations. To the Premier: does he recognize that he doesn't have a mandate? Does he not have the decency or the backbone to give a vote to Saskatchewan people on our Crown corporations?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Chairman, we campaigned on not allowing the Crowns to be privatized. That's exactly what we've moved to protect, Mr. Chairman. As a result of Bill 40, they cannot be privatized. What can happen, though, is there could be a partnership perhaps.

Now, now the Deputy Leader of the NDP is, he's kind of chirping from his seat again. He'll love this. He might remember it because he was sitting over there when Enbridge

was talking to SaskEnergy about buying into the company. This briefing note from SaskEnergy, again under the NDP, is called "SaskEnergy and Enbridge: potential opportunities."

Here's an interesting paragraph under the NDP's briefing note. Here's an interesting paragraph. It's called "Enbridge as an equity partner." "Enbridge and SaskEnergy have discussed possible synergies between our respective companies that would bring benefits to SaskEnergy and its subsidiaries. Enbridge has indicated a willingness . . ." Oh now I'm going to wait till the Deputy Leader's done heckling because he'll want to hear this . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Go ahead. You'll want to hear this.

Here we go. "Enbridge has indicated a willingness to consider a minority investment up to 40 per cent of SaskEnergy's assets." That's the NDP plan. Now would that have been privatization? Would that have been privatization? Would it have been . . . I'm asking members opposite. They don't want to chat anymore, Mr. Chair. They want to chat from their seats. I'm asking the Deputy Leader, when you sell 40 per cent of SaskEnergy, is that privatization? Is it? Because if it isn't, then what are you saying about Bill 40, which would limit the government from selling more than a controlling interest, exactly what you planned?

In fact the NDP even had a . . . This is good. The NDP even had a project name for it. Their plan to sell SaskEnergy was called Project Rainmaker. And in that plan . . . And moreover, it gets even better. Here's how far the plan went. CIBC World Markets and KPMG Corporate Finance conducted a review for CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] for the NDP, for the Crown Investments Corporation, for their energy Crowns, SaskEnergy and SaskPower, which was apparently open to these equity partnerships as well. Their review of SaskEnergy focused on two primary business units: gas distribution and gas transmission.

Now, Mr. Chairman, it's a very good debate to have. I'm glad we're having it. But how in the world is allowing a partnership of less than 50 per cent for SaskEnergy when the NDP are in power, how is that not privatization, but when any other party does it, it is privatization?

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Of course that never happened, Mr. Speaker. We have a Premier that has no mandate. It's been clear. I've asked him time and time again to at last have the decency and the backbone to run on this, to Saskatchewan people, and to earn that mandate if that's what he'd like. What we have right now is a betrayal to Saskatchewan people.

We know of at least 11 entities that have engaged government as it relates to SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance]. Have there been other entities or any further update the Premier can bring us here as it relates to SGI?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chair, as the minister has testified in committee, those meetings occurred. We're certainly not going to be disclosing names of companies on the floor of the House. Mr. Chairman, we'll take our cue from the NDP who said, if and when such a business arrangement is finalized, we will announce it.

Actually we'll do better than that, Mr. Chairman. Long before

that, there'll be a public discussion about any partnership . . . that the NDP used to call a partnership but now they call privatization or Project Rainmaker. But we will, Mr. Chair, we will do much better than what you were going to do for Saskatchewan people. Because, you know, I ran in the election prior to this rainmaker project, and I don't remember the NDP saying word one about any changes to the Crowns. In fact I remember them campaigning on quite the opposite, Mr. Chair.

So I will just say this. We'll do much better in terms of disclosure than members opposite were going to do because we had to dig through SaskEnergy documents to find this, Mr. Chair. And moreover the meetings did not occur with the minister. They occurred with the president and CEO [chief executive officer].

Mr. Chairman, it shouldn't be a surprise to members in the House that with Bill 40, with the opportunity to allow for partnerships that can expand the Crowns, create jobs here, solidify their position, we do want Crown corporation executives to be meeting with potential partners, much as they did under the NDP when they were looking for partnerships, whether it was with Enbridge or whether it was TransCanada Pipelines or Atco.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — So no answer there. How many discussions with private entities or their representatives have happened with looking at, I guess, so-called partnerships; maybe even, in the Premier's wordplay, with SaskTel?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Chair, when any really serious discussions happen when we get close to a decision point, we'll certainly have a public discussion about that. But not until then.

And I would just want to point out once again, the Leader of the Opposition, the interim leader of the NDP, said so-called partnerships, Mr. Chairman . . . or word play. No, he referred to it as word play. Mr. Chair, it's the words you used when you were in power, when you talked about a 40 per cent sale of SaskEnergy to a company, Enbridge. You did, in government, talked about selling SaskEnergy, a Crown corporation, 40 per cent of it. You characterize it . . . they characterized it, Mr. Chair, as a partnership. Once again in the interests of their own credibility, why is it a partnership when they proposed it, but privatization or something more nefarious when anyone else proposes it?

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — There was no answer to the question. How many meetings, with which entities have meetings occurred, with a so-called partnership as it relates to SaskTel?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Chair, there's been preliminary inquiries and discussions as a result of Bill 40, shortly after the election when MTS [Manitoba Telecom Services] was a takeover candidate and that deal happened to proceed. And I indicated that, look, if we got an offer and the offer seemed to check a lot of boxes, we would have a referendum and see if the people wanted to change the ownership structure, until it was very clear to me that Saskatchewan people under no circumstances were interested.

But as a result of that discussion, there's been telcos across this country that have asked and inquired about the status of

SaskTel. There are not, to my knowledge, to my knowledge, in-depth, detailed partnership discussions. There are general inquiries that are happening, I would say that's fair to say, general discussions that Crown officials are engaging in, as should be the case. And we should not be debating them in the interests of protecting the interests of the Crown corporations. We shouldn't be debating the names of those companies on the floor of the legislature.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — No answer, no transparency. We know that one of his former insiders is repping one of those big telecoms.

As it relates to SaskPower, what sort of meetings and with which entities have occurred with potential so-called partnership with SaskPower?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — There's been none, Mr. Chair. No meetings with partners. There has been a discussion in government and we've had it publicly that, you know, in the case of an electrical utility, it provides for certain conveyances and institutional investors the opportunity for steady, maybe lower-yielding, but steady returns.

And, Mr. Chairman, right now if a Saskatchewan institutional investor or a Saskatchewan pension plan or a government-related investment agency like workers' compensation, that WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] fund, or Auto Fund, if it wanted to invest in a electrical utility, a good, strong electrical utility, it couldn't even invest in SaskPower. It would have to go to Bay Street. It would have to go to some other province, maybe Ontario Hydro.

[16:45]

And so we have notionally talked about a change whereby those institutional investment vehicles — like our pension plans in the province, and like the Auto Fund that we have here, maybe WCB — could make an investment in a company like SaskPower. But there have been no meetings and no specific discussions with any particular entity regarding Bill 40 and SaskPower.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Sounds like the kind of deals that the Minister for SaskPower and the GTH used to do with himself, Mr. Speaker. What about with SaskEnergy? What kind of meetings have been had as it relates to SaskEnergy and any sort of so-called potential partnerships there?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Enbridge, TransCanada Pipeline, Atco, but that was under you, when you were the government. There's been no meetings under this government.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — You know, arrogant, petulant, petty, divisive, I mean, but you know that's his prerogative, Mr. Speaker, and Saskatchewan people will see it for what it is. And as I say, people across this province, in rural and urban Saskatchewan, and the North and the South, still expect their Premier and those that come before them to be straight with them, Mr. Speaker. And you know, I guess the Premier, even if he is outgoing or whatever his state of play is, owes it to Saskatchewan people to serve their interests. We certainly don't see that, Mr. Speaker.

As far as the STC, the STC sell-off, of course a total betrayal of Saskatchewan people, something that hits the most vulnerable incredibly hard. A service that connects our entire province, Mr. Speaker. Something that's important economically. Something that's a lifeline for patients. Something that supports our health system, Mr. Speaker, with the movement of blood, and goods, and supports our library system.

My question with this reckless sell-off, again a betrayal to Saskatchewan people from this Premier, what sort of analysis went into the actual costs of picking up all the parts, the pieces of what STC provides Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. First of all, with respect to the last answer, I just think it's important that we — all of us, including our side — we know the difficult decisions we've made, and we're about to discuss one now, that there is an understanding that from time to time the debate as it exists between us can also have a little bit of levity. Not on this particular issue though. This is a very serious issue for those who were served by STC and those who were employed by STC — good employees of the Government of Saskatchewan, long-standing employees of the province.

You know, Mr. Chair, with respect to the specific question on transitioning, health is involved. The Ministry of Health is involved in terms of providing services that STC used to provide previously before the wind-down. I would note that there are many, many, many communities that were never served by STC, in part because of route cuts that both parties have undertaken with respect to STC, and sometimes for other reasons because there never were routes in the first place. And there were provisions made within the Ministry of Health to be able to accommodate those realities.

The same will be true in Social Services where there will be support for those who need it. I noted that earlier today. The Leader of the Opposition asked the very appropriate and reasonable question about the cost of the taxis that have been used in the transition, and he used the number of \$21,000. I'm certainly not going to refute that number, but I would point out that's about half the daily, I think it's half the daily subsidy, half the daily subsidy that taxpayers have been putting into STC here recently. So we are going to . . . It's not a small amount though.

We are going to continue to provide those services and transition away from the previous model. And the previous model has been losing a lot of money for a lot of years, to the point now where the subsidy is, on a per passenger basis, the subsidy from taxpayers is over \$90 a person. And, Mr. Chairman, we've just . . . we have decided that, even as important as the service is, it's not sustainable. And as I've noted, you know, other political parties in power, including my friends opposite, they've done a similar analysis. Members opposite cut routes. They eliminated routes when the subsidy was not nearly that high. When the subsidy was a third of that, they had decided that that's too much money to subsidize a route at 30 bucks a passenger, and they cut it. That would have been a tough decision for them to make. That would have impacted people along that line. That would have impacted the drivers. But they took that decision.

We also made some route rationalization decisions. I can share with members again that the per passenger subsidy is now up to over \$90 a passenger, \$90. And so at some point the government has to say, we need to make a priority decision here. Do we have \$90 million to invest in STC over the next five years? That's what it would take, \$90 million. Or do we want that to go to core services in health care and education and infrastructure and social services. Well we chose to make the difficult decision and prioritize that 90 million over the next five years into those other areas. But we understand that it poses challenges for people and more importantly we dramatically affected the lives of the employees at STC.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Chair, this is a true betrayal of Saskatchewan people. And for the Premier to minimize the value of STC to Saskatchewan people and the vast arteries that it connects, our vast and beautiful and remote and rural province is . . . Well he does so at his own peril or the peril of those that are going to be there for his party after him, Mr. Speaker. STC is a lifeline to our province. It's incredibly important to organizations and health care, libraries all across our province. It's valued by businesses. It's valued by farms. It's valued by students. It connects people to opportunities.

And the Premier's presenting again false choices here. He's pretending somehow that this cut is . . . Well the reality here and the choice that he has made is that he's giving a break to the biggest corporations in Saskatchewan to the tune of \$60 million, at the same time as he's doing in STC with no analysis of any potential savings. Because again, this is something that government will be having to pick up the costs for a piecemeal system that serves Saskatchewan people in a much poorer way to get patients to the care and appointments and services they deserve, for example. And the list can on from blood services through to the libraries. It's the same kind of reckless, short-sighted approach we see from this Premier on so many fronts.

I guess my point would be this: he has no mandate to do this. He certainly wasn't straight with the workers who lives have been devastated. And he has no analysis before us here today to support the choice that he's made from a fiscal perspective even, Mr. Speaker. So I guess, I ask the Premier: how can he stand by this sell-off without any financial analysis and without a mandate? In fact the opposite of a mandate, he promised he wouldn't sell off STC.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, I just don't agree with the hon. member. I do agree about the seriousness of the issue, but certainly there is analysis done. I've just shared with members of the House that if we were to continue with STC, the subsidy would be . . . we'd have to invest \$90 million over the next five years. We've provided a subsidy since 2007 of \$112 million. I have noted that per subsidized . . . forecasted subsidy for . . . the subsidies forecasted for STC per passenger in '17-18 is going to be \$94 per passenger. There's been an analysis done, and we've made a difficult decision that we can't afford this \$90 million when we have so many other needs in government that need our attention.

But I want to talk a little bit about . . . Well first of all, the other thing the hon. member indicated was that businesses rely on STC. And some do, I would say that's the case. But when his



party was in power they cut routes, and when those routes were cut the profitable part of STC — that's the parcel side — there was an uptake in that activity by the private sector. Now I think the hon. member would agree with me that there's every likelihood that the private sector is going to pick up that parcel side, that profitable parcel side, after the wind-down. Now I'll correct the member again: we're not selling the company. The company's not profitable. There is not a company to sell. It is a wind-down.

Now I would also point out to members that there will be also some profitable passenger routes, and we've already seen companies step forward and indicate that there's an interest in providing daily service along a number of routes in the ... Some of the routes that the private sector I think has stepped forward, and weren't necessarily profitable ones, I'm not sure.

The member for the Martensville constituency has an entrepreneur that wants to do a daily route I think at 15 bucks a passenger, which is like almost a tenth of what we would have to charge because of the overhead that we have and the salaries we pay. And so you can have a small business provide these services, and we certainly are looking forward to seeing that happen.

When the NDP were in power and they cut routes, we did see an uptake in the parcel service. I remember up No. 32, up the Leader line. I remember the mayor of Leader, Mar Clary. He also drove the bus. He started a little business when they cut that line, and he took people up and down 32 to Swift Current in a passenger van. So there's going to be options.

But I also want to indicate that in terms of remote areas of the province being served, of the 5,000 trips provided through the northern medical transportation program in 2015-16, less than 1 per cent were by bus. Of the northern medical transportation program trips, 356 by plane, 1,410 by ambulance obviously, 3,146 by taxi, and 34 by bus. And so with respect to that particular issue — which is important, that's health care access for northerners — you can see that less than 1 per cent were on the bus. And we're going to be able to absorb those certainly through these other modes of transportation that people have been choosing or their professionals have been choosing, Mr. Chairman. But that's what certainly will be in place.

Social Services also provides travel benefits for SAP [Saskatchewan assistance plan], SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability], and TEA [transitional employment allowance] clients to assist them in a number of different situations. Transportation is then based on the most appropriate method and the needs of the clients and their proximity. There's a number of other initiatives of support for people who will be able to get around.

But again I would reiterate that prior to these changes to the wind-down, there are many communities that were not served by STC at all. And so whether it was the transportation of blood, whether it was people who needed the access either to medical appointments or for reasons of social services, there were provisions for them, and there will be going forward.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — The Premier of Saskatchewan has no mandate on this front. It's not decent to cause this sort of

damage and to sell this off without being straight with Saskatchewan people. But we see this as a sort of attack on people, the most vulnerable on many fronts — cold-hearted, damaging cuts at the same time as the Premier has giveaways and breaks for the most wealthy and well connected, as we've canvassed well here today.

But let me just go through a few of what these actual impacts are because the fight is real for Saskatchewan families who are facing these sort of devastating cuts. Of course you had the promise from the campaign of this government to have individualized funding for those with autism. That promise broken, leaving those families left high and dry without the supports that they were promised. Taking away the basic dignity of a funeral service for the working poor and for those on social assistance, Mr. Speaker, an outlier in the rest of Canada on this front and lacking any level of humanity and decency that the people of the province deserve.

Or cuts as we see in this budget, and these aren't big money items. The big money items are of course \$60 million for the largest corporations. That's the giveaway; that's the break that this Premier's pushing forward. Or the \$40 million, I think \$38 million for the highest wage earners, Mr. Speaker, at the same time that they make a cut here to cut the paratransit support for those on SAID, Mr. Speaker, those that are living with disabilities, those that are overcoming all of those challenges daily that need support to get to medical appointments, to get to job opportunities, to have healthy social relationships. And of course they've made the changes to SAID that if they move from their program, they're reviewed — likely then to lose benefits as well — leaving so many, so many of the very most vulnerable held hostage at times where we also know we need to do so much better in supporting those facing domestic violence or supporting those in unhealthy living conditions.

Or we see the cuts to children, the cuts to the Discovery Preschools, which help children with intellectual disabilities, with autism, that have complex needs and experienced trauma, the cuts to the communication preschool.

[17:00]

You know, the cuts on these fronts go on and on, and they're not large budget items. They're actually quite affordable in the scheme of things. What's a big budget item is a \$100 million break to the wealthiest and well connected.

Or we see the cuts to the hearing aid program, \$3 million of so-called savings at the expense of kids and families across Saskatchewan who are being deprived of the dignity, the opportunity that's presented with being able to hear, Mr. Speaker.

Cuts to the parent mentoring program, \$1.4 million, and is support that, for a province as vast as ours and with the challenges of parenting and with postpartum, and all the realities of young families and young moms and young dads, we need to make sure those supports are in place.

Or the cuts to spiritual care in our health facilities, in our hospitals, depriving Saskatchewan people at a time where they may need it most, the ability to connect with that level of care.

Mr. Speaker, many people who may not have relied or have a relationship with a faith leader on a regular basis through their life, who might be at a point in their life who really need it, Mr. Speaker.

Cuts to podiatry, \$1.2 million in so-called savings, but the reality being stated very clearly that if we don't provide these services, that we're going to be dealing with amputation after amputation for those on, with those with diabetes, Mr. Speaker. And you know who has diabetes in our province? Many, many in our province. It's prevalent though, Mr. Speaker, for far too many across our population, and it's prevalent for our First Nations and Métis people, Mr. Speaker.

Cuts to seniors, increases to long-term care fees that are being hiked up \$620. These are small budget items with devastating impacts on real families and real people across Saskatchewan.

How can the Premier gift and give away the benefits of close to \$100 million to the wealthiest and the most well connected while devastating these kids, families, and people across our province?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would point out again for members, I'm not sure how many times it's been that what the member just characterized as a giveaway for well-connected people, they believed to be good economic policy when they were in government.

Premier Calvert, who I think had a pretty solid record on the social side of things — although under certain areas where again there was more talk than action — understood that the importance of a strong economy to support quality of life. And what the member just characterized as a giveaway to the well connected, his party used to say in government was good economic policy.

Mr. Chair, we want to have a strong economy, and we have had a strong economy and have a strong economy in this province, to support quality programs. Members opposite often ask, where did the money go? And I'm going to answer the questions directly about the record on this side of the House, with respect to help for those who are most vulnerable, and deal specifically with the budget.

First of all I would point out that in this very difficult budget, this was the largest social services budget in the history of the province. When other ministries were being reduced this is . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well and the member for Regina Lakeview is heckling and maybe disagreeing with that.

Here's how this breaks down. The largest social services budget in the history of the province breaks down to a 5.5 per cent increase in the children and families area, support for children and families in the province; a 1.1 per cent increase for people with disabilities — 3.7 billion across all ministries for people with disabilities since 2009. And in this budget, the one the member just criticized, there's a 13 per cent increase in income assistance programs which serve poor people in our province, low-income people in our province. Well he's shaking his head. That's how the budget breaks down. That's what's in the provincial budget.

And moreover, he asked a question about SAID. SAID was created by members on this side of the House in 2009. The disability community in this province — and there's a former Social Services minister — they asked for the dignity of a program like SAID from members opposite . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Fair enough. I was wrong. I don't think he was the minister of Social Services.

But the disability sector said, we want the dignity of a program. We want it. Our situation's different. It's not that we want social assistance. We are unable to work, and so we want income support. And so it was our government that created SAID. And in '17-18 in the budget — the member's just talking about SAID support — it's \$149.3 million is the budget for SAID. Since its creation, our government has provided almost \$1.2 billion.

We have increased the maximum SES [Saskatchewan employment supplement] benefits by 14 per cent and extended the earnings threshold by approximately 16 per cent to help those families who are among the working poor. We've increased the minimum wage by 34 per cent. And now it's indexed and will keep track with the rate of inflation, the cost of living.

I've said this earlier today. We've tripled the seniors' income plan, which was ignored and frozen for 16 years when there was some pretty good years in there. When members opposite could have helped out low-income seniors with that plan — it's their program — they did nothing. They froze it for 16 years.

It's been tripled since 2007 and protected in this very difficult budget. Mr. Chairman, we have invested 149.3 million in child care subsidies since 2007. There's been 5,000 new licensed child care spaces created since 2007, and this is in terms of support for families in the province of Saskatchewan. I could go on and on. We did campaign on increasing . . . We created SAID and then we campaigned on increasing SAID supports a couple of elections ago, and we kept that promise.

Mr. Chair, and perhaps most importantly for some of us, it was our government that decided that 440 people with an intellectual disability waiting on a wait-list for the dignity of a home was probably intolerable. It was probably the wrong thing here in Saskatchewan, because that's what we inherited. And so we took significant dollars and we invested to work with CBOs [community-based organization] to build group homes to take care of that.

There were some decisions taken in . . . Well I would also point out the member in his question mentioned the issues of domestic violence. Mr. Chairman, the very first centre to support victims of domestic violence built in the province since the '80s was built by this side of the House in the member from Melfort's constituency. I know that very well because the last one that was built was the government that preceded them way back in the '80s. My parents were on the local volunteer committee that tried to get that shelter built in Swift Current. That was the last one, in the '80s.

And so we've moved on this issue and we have a Justice minister who has been an advocate and a leader with respect to this particular issue, not just talking about it, but acting on it,

including funding that particular centre and a number of other initiatives. And we know that there's more work to be done. And we know that even though this is a record budget and we've made these record investments, that there is a great need in the province. And we are mindful that the way we will sustain, the way we'll be able to meet that need in the long term is a strong economy.

The member, . . . he had a long list, and I didn't keep track of all of them, but I heard him mention the pastoral care issue. I just want to . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . well in spiritual care. The Health critic's corrected me and fair enough.

The spiritual care issue is an important one. I want to share with members opposite what happens in my hometown and in Southwest Saskatchewan where the Swift Current ministerial makes sure, in an ecumenical way, in a way that respects all faiths, to ensure that they are making available spiritual or pastoral care. That has happened in our part of the world for a very long time. It's happened without the benefit of a government program. It's happened because people of faith have supported their churches, have supported their mosques, have supported their different faith communities with their dollars. They have contributed to make sure that there's a chaplaincy program, to make sure.

And by the way, the health region works with them and even when we have one health region in the province, we're going to make sure that it's understood that that kind of outreach is to be accommodated, that sort of spiritual care is to be accommodated.

And I can tell that the Health critic just doesn't agree. She's shaking her head. I would point out to her that while there has been government dollars for this same sort of program in certain places, depending where you live, it hasn't existed and didn't under them in other communities. Why is that? Well, why is that? I don't know if that's necessarily fair, Mr. Chair.

Here's what I do think is reasonable, is that . . . I mean I've been at meetings on Good Friday where that's been the cause, the charity, that's the reason for the offering, to support the Swift Current ministerial in delivering that chaplaincy program. And by the way, it's respecting of all faiths. I think that's an excellent role for our churches. It's not easy perhaps if people have grown accustomed to public dollars for that sort of thing, but I stand by the government's decision. Because I'll tell you what, in big parts of this province, it's worked without a government program. And I believe that it can work, that kind of spiritual care, that kind of pastoral care, can work everywhere in Saskatchewan without a government program.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Not adequate answers to cuts that are devastating to the people of Saskatchewan and false choices being presented by this Premier who is giving \$100 million to the most wealthy and well connected, with devastating cuts to people and families and the most vulnerable.

The increase in the social assistance budget of course is utilization. There's more people on social assistance. There's not more money for those on social assistance. What there is is dramatic impacts and hikes in their cost of living.

We have so many CBOs — shifting gears here, and wanting direct answers from the Premier on some of this stuff — CBOs through the health sector. Whether you're talking Planned Parenthood, or the Lighthouse, mobile crisis, you know, Hope's Home, the list goes on and on. But the minister has intimated that there's a 10 per cent cut coming. Now it's not going to be applied the same way across the sector. He says it'll be happening in June.

Well those working in the CBOs, those delivering service, deserve to have some certainty on this front. And certainly the Premier will have answers and I expect him here today to share what cuts, what impacts he's proposing. Obviously we don't think cuts should be on the table. We think that he should be cutting his giveaway to the corporations and supporting these CBOs. So could he come clean on his plans as it relates to our CBOs?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank the member for the question. Part of the difficult decisions in the budget wasn't just sort of the cuts that we were making to programs that are wholly within government, but also that are . . . some of the programs that had been delivered by our valued partners, and some of them are community-based organizations. There's a two-part answer to the member's question.

In the case of Social Services, the ministry is meeting with the CBOs, and on a case-by-case basis, going through the budget to achieve some savings. In the case of Health, there is a target of 10 per cent overall savings across all the CBOs, not to be 10 per cent from each one, but the overall target is 10 per cent. There will be, my understanding the Minister of Health has shared with me, that they are going to hear back from officials in June with some recommendations, and then the due diligence will work to ensure that the challenges are evenly shared with respect to the request for a 10 per cent reduction in CBOs, in overall CBO support on the Health side.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — The Premier has no clue on the realities in those CBOs, and how razor thin they operate and the services that they provide and the great lengths that they go to, to organize their resources to serve the most vulnerable. And the kind of games he's playing with those that give the most to those that need it the most are disgraceful, Mr. Chair. Those CBOs deserve answers.

But I need to move along to . . . You know, there's so many areas that are not getting the attention this Premier deserves. In the North we see, you know, closures of facilities that provide jobs. We see a lack of assistance flowing out of the devastating shootings in the school at La Loche. We see a government that's far more ready to do the photo op and the cute tweets, Mr. Speaker, but not the lasting work in a region. We see inadequate mental health supports. The list can go on and on.

But there's a program in the North that was providing tremendous hope for so many, for so long, that was transforming classrooms, transforming lives, and transforming communities, that was empowering those through the North and creating tremendous opportunity, certainly economically but socially as well. And I guess I ask the Premier of Saskatchewan, how does he think that it's in our benefit to scrap a program like NORTEP [northern teacher education program], that is part of

the hope and opportunity and stability in the North, instead of supporting and expanding that very important program?

[17:15]

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well thank you very much for the question. Mr. Chair, we share a desire to make sure that programming is available in the North. And I have good news to report to all members that's fairly current. There's been 232 brand new students applied to Northlands' university programming. That includes 45 for a Bachelor of Education; 35 of those are from NORTEP. So this is very, very positive. We see . . . And our vision is that university program will expand in the North, not contract. And these numbers are evidence of that being the case.

Northlands is up and running in La Ronge to be able to provide this. It's respected, I think. It has a very well-respected . . . It has a solid board. And it's made exclusively . . . That board is constituted of northerners. And it runs the university programs in Creighton and Buffalo and Ile-a-la-Crosse with plans to expand. And again I would repeat for members and for my hon. friend that we've seen 232 brand new students have applied for Northlands' university programming, including — and this is important — 45 into the Bachelor of Ed program, 34 of which are from NORTEP.

We're going to continue to focus on providing the programming. It might happen in a different way. The conveyance might have changed, but the commitment to the program and access to education remains. Advanced Education and Education also work together on the new Dene Teacher Education Program, or DTEP, which I think members opposite should mark well. Trains up to 30 local students to teach local, to teach them over four years, providing half of the \$480,000 program costs with school divisions and First Nations that cover the remainder.

And, Mr. Chairman, I don't, I just don't agree with the member's characterization that there haven't been supports, new and additional supports, in response to some of, well the very horrific event in La Loche, but others as well. Because that's not the case. There have been new resources and a new response in the North, and we can go through those. We could also probably agree that, given the scale of the problem, more needs to be done to be sure, and the challenge, more needs to be done. But to characterize the government as not caring, it belies the fact, Mr. Chairman, that we have been investing new resources in the North, not just in education, not just in things like revenue sharing for our municipal partners, but in programs, mental health programs, health programs, social services, counselling, and we can get into the details. Happy to try to get into the details of that later on, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, nothing in the Premier's words there that are meaningful to the North. We have a Premier that's been distracted this last year, blowing up and taking over a program that served northerners for so many years, that's provided tremendous hope and opportunity, instead of building upon it and looking at where he could invest his time and his resources for the greater good of all. At the same time he's, of course, he gives breaks to the most wealthy and well connected.

You know, another thing that the Premier was anything but straight with Saskatchewan people on was education. In the last election, he certainly didn't tell Saskatchewan people that he was going to force massive cuts upon our classrooms, at the same time as actually hiking education property taxes. He certainly never said he was going to silence our democratically elected local school boards, our local voices. And he certainly never said that he was going to be pulling millions of dollars out of post-secondary education, with massive consequences for our institutions, but for students. And he certainly didn't share that he was going to attack education in this way, all at the same very time as giving away benefits and breaks to the most wealthy and well connected.

When it comes to education, when it comes to our kids' classrooms that are already under so much strain, why wasn't this Premier straight with Saskatchewan people? Why won't he make the investment that they need and deserve?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, we've attacked education, I guess, with a 114 per cent increase overall in operating funding since we got elected. We've invaded education with eighty . . . eight hundred and seventy-five more teachers than were here, fully funded, than when members opposite were on the governing side.

Mr. Chairman, we've attacked education with brand new schools in rural and urban Saskatchewan. We invaded education with finally some maintenance dollars for school divisions, who couldn't get access to any dollars when, again, members opposite had a lot of money and time to talk but not a lot of time to act on fundamental maintenance issues that school boards would share with their MLAs on either side of the House.

Mr. Chairman, this particular budget poses challenges for the government and, to be sure, there are challenges in the education sector. But I am hopeful that there is going to be that ability to deal with those challenges, in part because they have received from this side of the House, from this government, more money in operating, greater increases, more money in capital, greater increases, finally some money for maintenance, than they ever did from members opposite when they had a chance to do more than talk, Mr. Chair — when they used to sit on very significant surpluses, when they actually gave school boards access to the local tax base as well, combined it all together and the support for education wasn't there.

Mr. Chairman, we've made some difficult choices, and I know I want to salute a number of the school boards that have done a very good job responding to those challenges. In my own home community, Chinook School Division, which was arguably hit as hard as any, harder than any, they have made some difficult choices. But they have decided to take some people that used to be in administration in the office and get them back in the classroom and save some spaces that way. They've decided to make sure that . . . And you know, they've had to make some choices around some professional services, but they have made the choice not to eliminate them but to make them available perhaps at a little bit of a greater distance than has been the case.

But the teachers are in the classroom. Positions have been

moved from admin to the classroom, and I want to give them full credit for dealing with the challenging situation that they have there, and I think a number of other boards have done the same.

Mr. Chairman, I think it's important for us to remember the context here. The members across the way are going to . . . They try to characterize this as some sort of attack, when the fact is that funding for education under this government has been unprecedented in our time in office, unprecedented. Operating funds to school up 114 per cent — I'm pretty sure the inflation rate over that period of time was not 114 per cent. And even though the province is finally growing and we see enrolment increases in some areas, I'm pretty sure that doesn't account for or constitute the . . . or take up the 114 per cent increase in operating funding.

Now, Mr. Chairman, we're going to get to a point in this province where things are balanced, and as I've said many times, and members, I know they . . . members opposite know that I say this, because they repeat it back to me: the best indicator of future behaviour is past behaviour. And our record of education is one of investment for our students, new schools in the province, maintenance for the schools that exist. That's what we do when there is any fiscal room at all. That's what we will continue to do, Mr. Chairman, even as we face the current fiscal challenge.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — You know, Mr. Chair, it's just so disappointing for Saskatchewan people to hear that sort of a response — and back-patting if you can imagine, Mr. Speaker — to those hard-working but beleaguered teachers and educators all across our province doing all they can for the students of today, and a budget that brings forward massive cuts on our classrooms with consequences of eliminating programs for students with intensive needs, for those that have experienced trauma, for those with autism, having the impacts of increasing class size in classrooms that have been growing and growing under this government and having cuts, supports being cut every step of the way. This is a damaging budget by this government.

But I also know Saskatchewan people value local control of their education, and I know that when I meet with boards, and our team as we've met with boards all across the province, it's evident in communities like Fox Valley where over 200 people come out to express their dismay and their feeling of being betrayed by this government when they're moving towards attacking local autonomy, local control. And of course this government's saying sweet things and pretending that they didn't do that, but Bill 63 that they passed gutted local control of our classrooms.

This is a Premier making clear choices. He clearly chose to ignore all the people across Saskatchewan and rammed forward with gutting local control. And he made choices as well to give breaks for the most wealthy and well connected to the tune of \$100 million, in the same budget that he actually increases education property taxes by, I believe, \$67 million, all while then actually cutting education by \$54 million. This is a government that has clearly not made education a priority.

How can this Premier, how can this Premier justify his choices?

Because that's what they are in this budget — its gifts to the most wealthy and well connected at the expense of students. How can he justify that?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear. The funding to school divisions, K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education funding is up 114 per cent since we were elected. I think I indicated that was operating; that's overall dollars — capital and operating — up 114 per cent since we came to office, Mr. Chair.

The member talked about, I think he was referencing the legislation with respect to government oversight for boards. Mr. Chairman, I will say to you, and for the record as I've said to a number of trustees, there is not going to be a material change in how boards operate. They will have autonomy. They will have independence to make the decisions they need to make to operate a school division.

But if a school division for example feels it necessary to go to take 12 people to, as the minister's pointed out, to Palm Springs on a trip and use precious education dollars to do that, we probably are going to step in. When a school division, a public school division wants to sue a separate division that's simply trying to maintain a school being open, spend taxpayers' dollars in a lawsuit and then more dollars spent by the separate division in that same lawsuit, we probably want the ability to step in.

Mr. Chairman, other Education ministers that were of the NDP persuasion agreed that their powers were limited. I think Andrew Thomson was one, an Education minister for the NDP, indicated his powers were limited with respect to stepping in and ensuring that school boards were focused on the classroom. Mr. Chairman, we know that is the case 99 per cent of the time, so they can expect autonomy and independence as they conduct their business.

[17:30]

But I think taxpayers also would want to know that their provincial legislature has at least now the legislative authority, not just moral suasion, not just the opportunity to call, but actual legal authority to step in and say, you are not going to sue another school division because the school division wanted to keep open a school. You are not going to use millions of dollars for that.

And I know the NDP don't agree. The NDP, well first they support the principle of the ruling. The Education critic came out in a moment of clarity and honesty when that ruling was made and said, we actually kind of support the notion here that public dollars should not be going to faith-based education and that . . . Well, we should find the quote. Is it right here? Well here it is. Here it is. Because . . . Now the member is chirping from her seat. The reporter asked her a question: "But you agree that non-Catholic students should not be funded in the Catholic schools as the Theodore ruling has?" This is the member, and I quote:

What I have said is that we recognize this was a decision that was made in the Court of Queen's Bench by the justice and I do not think it is appropriate that I would call into question that decision.

Well here's where we're different, Mr. Chair. The NDP don't think it's important to call into question that decision, which would impact 10,000 students plus, would be yanked from the separate system because they're not Catholics and would disrupt the education system in Saskatchewan, one that's working reasonably well. Well we don't agree. We think it's perfectly right for the government to call something like that into question. And we think it's perfectly right for the government, who is the sole funder of education, to have the legal authority that the member opposes, that he just criticized, to step in on those occasions and say to a school board, now we think we're going to call that into question. We think that's wrong. We think that's not in the interest of students.

Well the member is still chirping from her seat. I hope she gets up in the debate because she's had several positions on this issue. Here's what the reporter later on asked the member: "You're not as keen . . ." Here's what the reporter said to that member where she stated, I think by accident, true NDP policy, which I think people will remember at the next election. This is the reporter: "You're not as keen on giving 80 cents on the dollar to other independent associate schools," like the ones that they were welcoming and professing to support when they were in the House the other day. Those are the independent associate schools that the reporter is asking about. I'll repeat the question. The reporter says, "You're not as keen on giving 80 cents on the dollar to other independent associate schools." Here's what the member said: "If that comes at the expense of the publicly funded school system, no."

Then the reporter gives her another chance. The reporter says, "Does it? Does it come at the expense of the publicly funded system?" the reporter asked the Education critic. And here's what the MLA said, "Well if, I suppose, if we're looking at finite dollars, yes it does."

So that member wants to stand up, the leader wants to stand up and decry funding for schools. Meanwhile his Education critic is saying if they were the government, they wouldn't provide any per cent funding for associate schools. She would reduce funding for . . . And you know what? We shouldn't be too hard on the critic. She's just taking the lead of the Leader of the Opposition because the interim Leader of the Opposition in November 15 of 2012, when this government increased funding for those same associate schools . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the Deputy Leader wants to get into the debate as well. He should.

November 15th, 2012, when this government increased . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The question's on school funding. When we increased funding to associate schools — funding which has been maintained in this budget, which is very much part of the debate today — when we did that, here's what the now Leader of the NDP said, the same member that was praising and heralding those associate schools up in the gallery a few days ago. Here's what he said to the Minister of Education about funding associate schools at 80 per cent: "Will the minister do the right thing? Will he stop diverting dollars from a publicly funded education system?"

And so there you have it, Mr. Chair. The question's on funding for schools. What does he consider these associate schools, like Harvest or Regina Christian or Saskatoon Christian or the Huda

School or the Muslim school in Saskatoon that's an associate school that gets 80 per cent funding from the government so long as curriculum is followed . . . And by the way, they're getting great results in those schools, in those faith-based schools. They're turning out some pretty good graduates. When he had a chance to talk about funding for them in the House, do you know what he called them? He called them a diversion from the publicly funded system. That's the truth of his position with respect to funding schools.

We have a different view on this side of the House. We like to have the separate system. We like to have the public system. We want to support those associate schools at 80 per cent. We want choice for parents and quality education for students, Mr. Chairman. And what we will not do, what we will not do on this side of the House is say one thing to those schools when they're in the gallery and another thing when they're not here, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — You know, at least he's consistent on one thing, and that's not being straight with Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker. And the Premier can get up here, and he can yell and he can make all sorts of noise, but he's playing divisive, costly games. And certainly the Premier knows our high level of support, Mr. Speaker, for students in schools across Saskatchewan and our readiness to act. So he can play games all he wants. Certainly it distracts from the cuts that he's making in education, and certainly it distracts from the takeover of local control in our classrooms.

You know, I got a kick out of the Premier here today. You know, he gets up, and he's going to go cherry-pick a few examples that might not be the best example of public spending. Now certainly the voters can hold their local school boards accountable. I trust in voters to do that. But this is coming from the Premier, who's presided over mismanagement, scandal, and waste like we've hardly ever seen before in Saskatchewan. The guy that used to send them by the plane-full down to the airbag factory, Mr. Speaker, and buck after buck, good buck after good buck on the lean project or the carbon capture project, or managing a bypass, of course, that went from \$400 million to over \$2 billion, not supporting the Saskatchewan companies in the way he should, Mr. Speaker. Or of course, we could get into the GTH mess, the GTH mess of this government.

And I guess, on the GTH, you know, this Premier owes some answers to Saskatchewan people. Now he hasn't answered time and time again, and it should be a straightforward . . . It's a straightforward question. Should be a simple answer. When did the Premier of Saskatchewan learn that the original seller of land in the GTH scandal was a business interest . . . of the then minister responsible for the GTH?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Chair, I'll answer the member's question. I answered it on the 9th of March, but I'll answer it again for him.

But before I do, he just said we mischaracterized his position on funding for schools. Mr. Chairman, I've got a copy, there's a CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] article that's available to everybody from January 5th, 2012. And the headline is called, "Cash for independent schools hurts the public system: NDP." Now the Leader of the Opposition, the

current Leader of the Opposition, I think he was the Education critic, is quoted in the article. The article's about the government, our government providing 80 per cent funding for associate schools, the same ones that he professed to support when they were here in . . . [inaudible] . . . Now, he is quoted in this article, and it says this:

If this is a matter of evolving to meet the needs of certain students or certain communities, we have the abilities to do that within our public education system.

It's disappointing . . . [this is what he said] It's disappointing to see a government choosing to fragment that system instead of strengthening it.

Mr. Chairman, that's what he . . . First of all, the associate schools like Regina Christian and the Huda school, they were a diversion. In this article, he says that it's fragmenting the system when we support them. Nobody knows his position, and why would we blame them because I'm not sure he does because he just here today said again he's being mischaracterized. He's had plenty of opportunity to explain then.

Maybe, you know what, Mr. Chairman? I think he might want to just say — we've done it at times as government — to say, I was wrong. What I said in 2012, when I called those schools a diversion, I was wrong. Or when I called them fragmenting the system, I was wrong, and our position has changed. He might want to do that, or maybe not.

As for his question, Mr. Speaker, I indicated on March 9th that when the matter became public there was a lot of media coverage. That's when I learned about the identities of the people involved.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — When the matter became public. So we're talking about a member that still sits in this Assembly as a member of your caucus, as a minister that was a member of your cabinet, you're telling me that that minister, that friend of yours, that campaign manager of the Sask Party never levelled with you, that he had before cabinet a deal on the GTH with his own business interests, with the person he rented farm land from?

You're telling me that this whole deal came about, and then the second buyer came forward, and the Premier of Saskatchewan didn't have that information, didn't know that information, that that MLA who still sits in his caucus hadn't shared that with the Premier of Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Chairman, we're talking about a transaction that never happened, because it was a numbered company and we didn't know the identity of the numbered company. Mr. Chairman, the auditor deals with this matter in her report and says the following: "However during its due diligence and subsequent to the submission to the Cabinet . . ." This is the auditor now, maybe the Deputy Leader doesn't care much for us on this side, but I think we all respect the auditor:

However during its due diligence and subsequent to the submission to cabinet, the GTH could not satisfy itself as to the identity of the owners of 3rd Party B. As a result, it

did not seek Cabinet's approval or meet the conditions of the offer, and the offer expired.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — You know this is troubling and it's rather astounding what we have shared on the floor of this Assembly here today. This question has been asked of that Premier time and time again, and he's obfuscated, done all he can not to answer it.

But what we've learned here today is . . . And the Premier now is trying to say something that this deal never happened, but the deal did happen. It was sold to another supporter of the Sask Party. And the money was paid by the Sask Party, wildly exorbitant dollars, all while the minister responsible made sure that the grease was there, that the dollars were there from SaskPower, the hard-working people of Saskatchewan who paid for it there.

And of course, so we have a Premier who's revealed here today that he never had this information shared with him until, he says, just before the election. Now if this is believable, it's outrageous that that member, that MLA, that cabinet minister wouldn't have been booted that day from cabinet, Mr. Speaker. These are about dollars that have been wasted, that have been ripped off from Saskatchewan people.

To the Premier of Saskatchewan: it's hardly believable that you didn't have this information till that day, but let's just pretend that we . . . do. So you had the minister that brought forward a deal with his business interests, his landlord. And the cabinet ended up rejecting it, I think possibly with a bit of due diligence from the Justice minister. But then a year later this deal shows back up with a supporter and friend of government. This time not many questions asked; we'll just pay a whole bunch more than they were prepared to pay the year before, Mr. Speaker, and they do the deal.

To the Premier of Saskatchewan: with his revelation here today and with what he's learned, how can he defend not booting that minister from his cabinet? How can he defend not booting that MLA from his caucus because it speaks to the very heart and culture of the mismanagement of this government? This deal is under investigation and the fact it's taken this long to get to this answer is just beyond belief. How can the Premier continue to stand by that MLA as he stood by him as a cabinet minister?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, I've answered the question. The auditor points out that the identity's not known. I mean, the auditor, the report that we've debated for a year and talked about . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I didn't hear the member from Nutana from her chair. What's she alleging? She won't say it now, Mr. Chair, because that's their MO [modus operandi] on this whole file. They'll sort of throw out all manner of innuendo, not just against members here, but that businessman that he talks about, Mr. Marquart, who I think he knows personally. He might even be reaching out indirectly to say, make sure he doesn't know I . . . You know, this is nothing personal, Mr. Chairman.

[17:45]

Mr. Marquart's been at a leader's dinner. I met with him once. You've constantly characterized him as some sort of close

friend of the Saskatchewan Party, some big donor of the party. Check the numbers, check the facts. And you might want to, next time you're reaching out to him through other associates, other New Democrats in the community, when you're trying to reach out to Mr. Marquart, you might want to explain why would you continually smear someone, characterizing them as some friend of the government, some friend of the party, when the facts don't back it up? Comes to a leader's dinner, and for that, Mr. Chairman, he's dragged through unending weeks of mud by that leader.

Now it shouldn't surprise us because on not very much information, he also took to his place in the House and accused me of accepting a trip to Mexico with a developer. On the floor of this place, based on hearsay, that's what he did, Mr. Chair. Didn't check with it. Didn't look into it at all. So he not only . . . I mean I don't really care what he says about me. I don't really care. But think about that developer in this city — someone who has invested a lot of money, someone who has created a lot of jobs in this community — think how that developer feels for that drive-by smear. It's a bit of a pattern for my hon. friend.

The auditor indicated pretty clearly that the identity was not known. That's in the auditor's report. Moreover, Mr. Chair, I'm going . . . And he said, well why is he still in cabinet? That was the other question post the auditor's report.

In her report the auditor stated, and I'm quoting now. This is in the auditor's report:

For Board members and key employees we sampled, including the Board Chair . . . [that's the minister, the member for Kindersley] we did not find any . . . conflict of interest.

. . . For the Chair/Minister this is consistent with the Saskatchewan Conflict of Interest Commissioner's findings in January 2016.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — You know, Mr. Speaker, we don't question the folks out across this province. We don't question businesses. Who we question is the Premier of Saskatchewan who can't give a straight answer to Saskatchewan people, such as, you know, the appraisal.

You know, it wasn't long ago, apparently after the Premier had just learned this other information, the Premier said, well he had an appraisal that justified this exorbitant price, the millions of dollars that were wasted to the two supporters of the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker.

My question to the Premier: why would he suggest that he had an appraisal that justified that price when it's clear that's not the case? And if he had it, share it with Saskatchewan people.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Chair, a copy of third . . . I'm reading from the auditor's report again:

A copy of 3<sup>rd</sup> Party C's appraisal for the NW quarter of the East Parcels, which assigned a land value of about \$129,000 per acre; he recognized this appraisal used a different valuation approach than the GTH requested its

appraisers use. (The GTH did not receive the landowner's appraisal until negotiations were complete).

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — So why did the Premier say what he said? Why did he say he had an appraisal that justified the price, when we find out that it was never reviewed before the deal was done and we find out that the methodology was bogus?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chairman, the clearest indicator that there was probably another appraisal is that their appraisal was 129 and what was paid for the land was 103. There was another appraisal. And the person that has done the appraisal has denied authorization to release it.

But even if it was just the 129, which clearly it wasn't, because the land, the deal was for 103, consider that we've just sold land at the GTH for \$256,000 per acre. Even when you account for the servicing of the land which would probably be 70 or \$80,000 an acre at the high end, even when you account for that, we're making money. The taxpayers are making money on that deal.

And so I want to congratulate members opposite, because that original \$33 million you allocated as a grant in part support to CP to have them move out there was pretty prescient. It was forward-looking. Now we didn't pay that much. We got it for a lot less, but it was the right thing to do, because we've also seen not just Loblaw's, but any number of companies locating there and new jobs at the GTH. There was another appraisal. We are unable to release it at the request of those that did the appraisal, but the surest example that it happened is that what was paid was 103 when the seller's appraisal was 129.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — The \$103,000 an acre was outlandish. It was a rip-off. It ripped off Saskatchewan taxpayers, Mr. Chair. But it was the Premier of Saskatchewan who went out to the people of Saskatchewan, to the media, and said that he had an appraisal that justified that price, when that's clearly not the case. And even here today, try as he may, it's clear that that appraisal, the one that he references, was never reviewed by government before the deal was done and was a bogus methodology.

Why would the Premier of Saskatchewan stand before Saskatchewan people and the media and claim he has an appraisal that justified the price, when clearly it was neither reviewed or relevant?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Because there is an appraisal and because it's done by a professional. And it's not bogus, because it exists. And the evidence that it exists, to my hon. friend, would be that nobody paid 129 grand per acre for the land, which was their appraisal . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the deputy leader just said, well that explains it. And he's right. That actually does explain it. That's the answer to the question.

I mean there are . . . The auditor pointed out some shortcomings in the government's approach to this. There's no doubt about it. It was a time of highly rapidly escalating land prices. The auditors noted that the coordination from different ministries involved was not at the level it should be, that the policies with respect to land assembly would probably need to be modernized and updated. And we have responded to each of those



recommendations.

But there was also commentary on the issue of conflict of interest. There's also commentary on the fact that there is an appraisal. I'm telling the member opposite, and I guess he won't take me at his . . . word, that that appraisal is very much valid. And it's obviously a lot less than this number of 129, because the final price was 103.

And the other thing he said when he opened this last salvo was that, well that 103 was way too much. Mr. Chairman, we just sold land at the GTH for \$256,000 an acre. And even when you account for servicing, that is a profit. That's a profit. So based on what . . . Why is he saying, does he have an appraisal? Why is he saying that \$103,000 is too much given the fact that the market is now paying \$256,000 per acre for that land?

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — It's pretty outrageous what we see from the Premier today. He's now gone to a position to actually . . . At one point he pretended to be a bit contrite about these millions of dollars that were wasted. Now he's trying to suggest with deals like these, you know, who could criticize?

This deal wasted millions of dollars. The Premier doesn't have an ounce of evidence to support the exorbitant price that he paid. And of course the kind of games he's playing here today, about 103,000, comparing it to some other land — he's not comparing apples to apples. Some is developed and serviced, others . . . This land certainly isn't.

But it goes back to being straight with people again. The Premier of Saskatchewan told Saskatchewan people that he had an appraisal that justified the price that he offered these two supporters of his government. It's clear here today that the one for \$129,000, that they never even reviewed it, and it's also clear from the auditor's report of course that it was a methodology that wasn't relevant.

To the Premier of Saskatchewan: does he actually have an appraisal that supports this land acquisition? And if so, let's table it.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Chair, the answer is yes, we have an appraisal. It's quite clear we do because the appraisal from the other side was 129 and the final price was much less than that. And we have sought the approval of the appraiser to have it released and that approval's been denied, which it is in his right or her right to do.

Mr. Chairman, I'm going to canvass again as we have in this House, the problems that the auditor pointed out quite rightly with respect to the GTH land acquisition. Mr. Chairman, when questions arose around the GTH purchase of the 204-acre parcel of land in late 2013, that's when we asked the auditor . . . Well it was not 2013. It would have been . . . The parcel was in 2013. When the concerns were raised though, that's when we asked the auditor to look at the matter, and the auditor did, and the auditor found some challenges.

We co-operated fully with the auditor, Mr. Chair. We made available to the auditor cabinet documentation, which does not happen in every circumstance, I can assure you, when there is a particular issue.

I can remember even when SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company] was a particular issue, the then premier had his deputy minister investigate it. It wasn't an independent officer of the legislature. There was no . . . Well I guess there might have been access from the deputy minister to cabinet documents, but it lacked independence and it lacked, I think, scrutiny as a result.

The auditor did report that her office received full co-operation from the government and she released her report. Here's what she said, and we take this very seriously. The auditor stated there was a lack of coordination between the GTH and the Ministry of Highways that led to ". . . delayed decisions on buying the land during a period of time of rapidly escalating land values." She said those delays ". . . contributed to buying this land at a significantly higher price . . ." And that ". . . the Government did not take sufficient and timely action to mitigate its and ultimately the taxpayers' exposure to increases in land values." She also concluded that, "While all agreed on the importance of buying the East Parcels and were aware of the rapidly escalating land prices [I'm quoting the auditor], no agency had clear responsibility for leading the purchase of them."

Those are mistakes that we take responsibility for and that we take very seriously, and that we are moving to ensure never happens again by following the recommendations that she has made.

Mr. Chairman, in the pursuit of that very important economic development project, and in the very unique environment, at least unique for Saskatchewan because we just hadn't seen land prices escalating that rapidly in this province's — well except for maybe its earliest days — in the province's history. There were mistakes made.

But I would argue that the opposition has gone beyond the auditor's findings to make a lot of allegations and to cast aspersions not just on members of this House but members of the community, members of this community who are not particularly strong supporters of any one party because they may have gone to a dinner, but who are business people in the province of Saskatchewan in Regina and area.

He said earlier, he said I won't get up and sort of take a run or cast any aspersions at anyone else but the government, but that's not been his MO. Ask Denro what his MO is, or ask these two individuals. He just sort of writes them off as highly connected supporters of the party because they came to a dinner, because it suits his political commentary that sometimes escalate beyond even what he would want to present as a member of the House.

So the auditor also stated that, "For Board members and key employees we sampled, including the Board Chair . . ." and I'll repeat this, who's the member for Kindersley and the then minister, ". . . we did not find any . . . conflict of interest."

The auditor addressed this as well in a June 30 news release that said "The audit did not find evidence of conflicts of interest, or indications of fraud or wrongdoing by the GTH management or Board of Directors."

Later in an interview in radio, she indicated . . . I think it was the 4th of July. She said, “We didn’t do what is termed a forensic audit.” Sometimes members call for a forensic audit. But she said, “but in any audit as auditors we’re always looking for red flags. Because this is a land transaction, we did look for conflicts of interest.”

That’s what the auditor said: “. . . we did look for conflicts of interest. We didn’t find evidence of conflict of interest or indications of fraud or wrongdoing in the course of . . . [their] work, so there were no red flags there.”

So we take very seriously the recommendations of the auditor with respect to the problems she pointed out on the acquisition. But we also will defend the integrity and the position of the government as it has been assailed by members opposite even when we’ve had independent officers of this legislature say something quite different.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — The Premier here today has shared that he found out, or he’s shared with us that he found out that the then minister was in a business relationship with the original seller. He shares that when it became public. I mean, it’s beyond belief and completely irresponsible that this Premier wouldn’t have punted this minister from cabinet, this MLA from his caucus.

[18:00]

But my question is simple. So when the minister . . . What has the minister or the former minister, the MLA, shared with the Premier? Has he admitted that he had knowledge that this business interest was who he was doing a deal with? Or is he suggesting that he almost did a deal with his business interest but somehow didn’t know?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Chair, obviously if there was some sort of an arrangement the likes of which you’re alleging, he’s alleging, that would have been a conflict of interest. I told you when we found out about individuals. We were talking about a numbered company which we would not do business with. And, Mr. Chairman, I would point this out: the auditor interviewed everybody involved. I’ll repeat again what the auditor said: “For Board members and key employees we sampled, including the Board Chair [That’s the minister, the member for Kindersley] . . . we did not find any evidence of conflict of interest.”

Now maybe you don’t trust us; fair enough. But do you trust the auditor to have asked the appropriate questions? She says right here in the report, “For Board members and key employees we sampled, including the Board Chair . . . we did not find any evidence of conflict of interest.” What you’re kind of alleging would be a prima facie case for a conflict of interest. The auditor, not . . . Don’t worry about taking the MLA for Swift Current’s word for it. The independent officer of the legislature indicates that with respect to the Chair, the member, the minister, there was no conflict of interest.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Didn’t answer the question and . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, you didn’t answer the question as to when the MLA that still sits in this Assembly, when he suggests that he knew, when he found out that he almost did a

deal with his business interests.

Just on a bit of a different space, different question here. I’m wondering what email account the Premier uses with his Republican lobbyist from the US [United States]?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chair, I have a couple of personal email accounts. I’m happy to disclose this because truly it’s the member’s business. But I have a couple of personal email accounts, none of them that use the government server. And I’m home a lot and do a lot of work on the weekend, so some of those correspondence, not just with Ambassador Wilkins but with others. Even government officials and people from across the province would be corresponded on the basis of that private email address which I won’t be sharing with members of the House.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Fair on not sharing it with members of the House. I respect that response. But it does raise an interesting question. I’m not sure what sort of due diligence has been done on utilization of a personal account on a matter with this American lobbyist, with somebody that certainly is engaged in, you know, matters of national importance. And I know a few years ago, we asked for some correspondence on what kind of dialogue was occurring with this lobbyist, and back then this is what the Premier said:

Absolutely not, [and then he won’t share this] Mr. Chair. Here we have, engaged on behalf of the province of Saskatchewan, an agent that is representing our diplomatic interests, representing commercial interests in the province of Saskatchewan. No, we won’t be tabling those, Mr. Chairman. It would be irresponsible of the government to do it, regardless of the stripe of that government.

If these documents are so sensitive, I’m just wondering what sort of due diligence was done to utilize some sort of private email or private server for this sort of information. And I guess my only question on this is to hear what sort of due diligence has occurred, and would the Premier . . . I’m not asking him to share the contents with us, not asking him to share his private email with us, but will he turn this matter at least over for review to the Privacy Commissioner as well as the Conflict of Interest Commissioner?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — No, I have not checked with the Conflict of Interest Commissioner on this, Mr. Chair. The Nelson Mullins firm, Ambassador Wilkins isn’t lobbying another government, not lobbying the province of Saskatchewan.

I’m not sure where the member’s going. I’m not sure what the issue is here. We conduct business sometimes on the weekend. I’ll use my accounts that I have available on my iPad and we’ll be asking questions.

For example, we were engaged with Ambassador Wilkins a lot just prior to the recent trip to Washington. Mr. Chair, we had a number of meetings booked: Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross; Senator of Montana, Steve Daines; Jon Tester, Senator of Montana; Rick Perry, Secretary of Energy; Chuck Grassley, one of the senior members of the Senate, Senator from Iowa; Joe Manchin, Senator of West Virginia. Mr. Chairman we met with the head of the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency], Scott

Pruitt; the president of the director's office of management and budget, which is someone that's become . . . someone that I know, as a result of his connections to the South Carolina delegation, Mick Mulvaney.

And, Mr. Chairman we get great value for this. We don't have an office for which we pay over a million, as other provinces do. We have a contract, and we provide direction and requests to the ambassador to provide reports on how meetings are being arranged. There would be nothing in those emails of any particular sensitivity. The positions of our province are quite, are quite, I make them quite public, Mr. Chairman.

We'd like to continue to promote our leadership in BD3 [Boundary dam 3]. There would be references to that in the email. We were very worried for a time about country of origin labelling, when the Americans were going to ignore another WTO [World Trade Organization] ruling. So that kind of information would be in the email.

We were very worried about the softwood lumber situation. So our request to set up meetings to ensure that our case was being made on the softwood lumber agreement, that would be part of the email that we would send, that we would ask with respect to the ambassador, any number of issues around the trade file, around NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement].

But, Mr. Chairman, there would be nothing of any particular sensitivity in the emails, other than doing the business of the province and ensuring the interests of the province are appropriately represented in the US capital.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Okay well, maybe, Mr. Chair, but I guess . . . So the Premier's been asked to provide some information about these emails, this correspondence, in the past, and again the Premier's response was clear on that side. It said, an agent that is . . . He said, "Absolutely not, [first of all that] . . . an agent that is representing our diplomatic interests representing commercial interests in the province of Saskatchewan. No, we won't be tabling those . . . It would be irresponsible of the government to do it, regardless of the stripe of that government."

So it seems that, at that point, the Premier was suggesting that there was rather sensitive information, which you'd suspect that there certainly could be in this sort of communication. The Premier stated that there hasn't been due diligence or engagement with the Privacy Commissioner or with the Conflict of Interest Commissioner to date.

And I guess my question is just straightforward to the Premier right now. I'm not asking him to share those contents with Saskatchewan people. I'm not asking him to share his private email address. But would he ensure that these email accounts are reviewed? This matter is reviewed. The integrity of this system is reviewed. The contents of this matter is reviewed, both by the Privacy Commissioner and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, who are in a position of trust to report out whether or not this system is appropriate?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chair, it's a private account, but I've taken obvious steps in terms of the security of the account. I can share with members that part of the correspondence, with

respect to the Washington trip, would be very specific to some companies who have interests and concerns around Buy America provisions, and I do not think it's appropriate for them to be disclosed. I mean anybody can . . . I guess if there's an independent officer of the legislature that feels compelled to look at them, that's one thing. But I would say to the members opposite that I'm not sure what sort of a fishing trip you're on, but appropriate measures have been followed in every circumstance, with respect to what's in the emails. And again this firm's not lobbying Saskatchewan; they're lobbying the US government.

I do not think it reasonable to request a review of these things given the fact that in certain circumstances, companies, individual interests, are being represented because their interests and the employees that work for them align with the interests of the province of Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Well as I say it's important that that be reviewed by the Privacy Commissioner and the Conflict of Information Commissioner. We trust them to report out to the people of the province.

Shifting gears, you know, significantly but certainly there's many that are observing and waiting for this matter to be addressed. Again we see a government that's giving all sorts of giveaways and breaks to the wealthiest and well connected at the same time as they're making cuts for the most vulnerable. We see that in mental health of course. We see that as well for addictions, and we see that with the cuts that are happening through our CBOs. And we see that then with the broken deals and the dollars that are being pulled back from our cities.

We see an impact on the cuts to policing as well. This is a really troubling combination to police forces and police across our province, but also to our communities. And I know it's been relayed to us in meetings with Saskatoon police, Regina police, other officers across the province, that the inadequate access to mental health and the challenge to access addiction services are very real. Couple that with what's happening in Regina right now is a million dollar cut in their budget because of the cuts of this province, this leaves policing, but our communities and people in a challenging way, all while we see a massive increase, a very troubling crisis with utilization of crystal meth. And when you chat with police forces across the province and members, there's a direct correlation that they share with the violence in our community, with the crime in our community, with the guns in our community, and the massive spike, the massive utilization of crystal meth.

So I guess my question to the Premier, this is an area that needs attention and I beg his attention. We need the investment in mental health. We need the investment in addictions. We need the investment in policing. We need it in our CBOs. We don't need a giveaway to the largest corporations. Does the Premier recognize this very real challenge?

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Chair, I thank the member for the question. The issues that he raised are very, very important. Mr. Chair, we have, since coming to office increased police services. And I think there might have been a characterization, a mischaracterization of cuts to police services in the member's preamble, where there have not been.

Mr. Chair, with respect to some of the current issues that are facing us, you know, we noted . . . I'll get to the issue of opioids in a moment here and specifically fentanyl, which is increasingly of concern in our province.

You know, we had members on this side of the House led by the member for North Battleford engage with stakeholders — SARM and SUMA and police officers, the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police], but other police agencies — on the issue of rural crime which is a very, very important issue as well. And we're going to see some recommendations and some action flowing from that. There was \$1 million actually in the budget for new initiatives with respect to rural crime.

I'd expect that we would also want to provide some support for our police agencies in the big cities who are dealing with an outbreak, whether it's opiates . . . Fentanyl in particular is an issue. We are working hard to enhance the availability of naloxone, which is that spray that can immediately counteract the impacts of fentanyl. We're working hard to make that available to our police as well.

And you know, I hope members opposite will recognize it's been our government that's actually funded new additional positions amongst our policing agencies. The work of ICE [Internet child exploitation] to protect children in our province has been remarkable and we've celebrated their efforts in the House.

So I want members to know that this remains a priority, and I want members to know that we, far from reducing resources here, we announced in the budget additional money to support the work of the committee led by the member for North Battleford. And we're engaged with our police chiefs on some of the other key issues that are in our . . . very concerning are more prevalent in our big cities.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Do we have time for questions or . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — No, that's it.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I'm being told by our House leaders that the time has expired at this point. I just want to follow up for a moment though on that question. The response around fentanyl is very much appropriate, and we need the response there, but crystal meth is something different and it needs a response. And when you see the cuts that are happening with mental health and addictions and then the cuts that are being forced on policing through the cuts to the municipalities, this makes it really, really challenging.

[18:15]

I'd like to get around to just sort of closing here today. And I'd like to thank certainly the officials that are here today and the Premier for his, well the Premier for his time here today. But to say that . . . to categorize this budget and the actions of this government as anything but a betrayal of Saskatchewan people and damaging, would be not fair.

And the choices that we see of this government to gift and give away \$100 million to the most wealthy and well connected, the highest wage earners, the biggest corporations at a time where

they take away the critical supports and the lives of the most marginalized, the lives of the most vulnerable, at a time where they make people and families pay the price for years of the mismanagement and scandal and waste, just isn't right.

And then when we see, on so many fronts, we're dealing with a government and a Premier who sadly just isn't straight with Saskatchewan people on file after file. Desperate sell-off schemes and attempts of our Crown corporations without even having the decency or backbone to go to the owners of those Crown corporations, the shareholders of those Crown corporations, the people of Saskatchewan.

Or the cuts on our already strained and stressed classrooms, despite taking more out of property taxes. Or the takeovers that this government conducts on front after front, from NORTEP through to our school boards through to our health regions through to Wascana Park, Mr. Speaker, if you can imagine.

A government that clearly doesn't have trust in Saskatchewan people to lead and do their job, and a Sask Party that's lost its way but seems to think it needs to have full control of everything, which is pretty problematic when you see a government that can't even get the small stuff right, like a land deal out at the GTH, Mr. Speaker.

There's good reason why so many across this province who work so hard every day, people and families and businesses and farms, are feeling dismayed and feeling deceived, Mr. Speaker. What I'll convey to them is we're going to continue to work to stand up for the province we all love, to stand up for people, and to fight to build our province together.

I thank the Premier for his time here today. I thank the officials for their time here today. And I certainly thank all the civil servants that work all across government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Chair:** — Seeing no other members wishing to enter into the debate, I would ask the Premier if he would like to make some concluding comments.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — I would, very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank my hon. friend, the Leader of the Opposition, for his questions, for his time tonight, for his commitment and dedication to the province of Saskatchewan as well as his specific constituents.

I want to acknowledge the fact that this is likely the last time we will do this, given the timetable that's been announced for the New Democratic leadership. And so we've only had, I guess, a couple of occasions for it. But I do . . . He's passionate about the province and it comes across certainly in the questions he has to ask. I don't always agree with, well I rarely agree with the preamble to the questions, but it's important that they're asked, Mr. Chair, and it's important that they're answered, even if the answer does not quite meet the test of the person that's posing the question or members across the way.

Mr. Chair, this was a very difficult budget that we introduced in Saskatchewan. And there's been an interesting trend that's been happening over the last couple of quarters, I would say, whereby the economy of the province of Saskatchewan is

strengthening, but the budget of the province, the fiscal health of Saskatchewan, has not been improving. Usually that doesn't happen. And that's why a lot of people in Saskatchewan just don't . . . It's hard for all of us to understand, well, how can there be this divergence because it seems to be usually the case that the economy and the budget of the government moves in tandem. The economy creates more tax revenue and the government can do more things and avoid deficits and that sort of thing. But we are seeing that reality now.

And here's perhaps — maybe it's anecdotally; I think it's more than that — here's perhaps part of the reason why. I live in Swift Current, which is right in the heart of Saskatchewan's oldest oil field, and we have a lot . . . I have neighbours involved in the energy sector, Mr. Chairman. I would walk our dog down the alley, and visit with one of them in particular who had been out of work for 18 months. He had been an independent contractor, so employment insurance wasn't really an option for him. And moreover, he had been wise and put away a lot of money for a rainy day, much as the government did. And just like the government, his rainy day fund had ended because he was out of work for so very long.

Well I'm not sure as to his current status right now, but I'm hopeful that he's going back to work or is back to work because so many, so many are in the energy sector in my hometown. They are going back to work. They may be going back to work for a little bit less than what they made before. I think at this count the wage reduction is a lot greater than 3.5 per cent that we all took as members, but they're heading back to work.

Mr. Chairman, they're heading back to work because the industry, the oil industry in particular, has adjusted to 50 bucks West Texas. And it was obviously a lot higher and that adjustment period took long, but they've driven their costs down so that there can be some activity again. And I think the results of drilling reports here recently — I look at the member for Weyburn — have been very, very positive, and the member for Cannington, and all of those of us who are fortunate enough to represent the energy sector. And they're drilling again, even though today I think it was 45 bucks, not that I look every hour at the price of oil. But the prices remain low and yet the activity continues.

And therein might lie the answer to the question the people have asked, which is, if the economy is strengthening and getting stronger and stronger, why then does the government need to take these steps in the budget? And the answer is that the economy is adjusting to lower commodity prices, and the most important factor: people getting back to work is happening, but the government is not generating the revenues that it used to generate.

And so now for the last three years we've been over a billion dollars off in resource revenue. And the problem is going to be intractable, it looks like, for some period of time. I haven't met very many experts who are forecasting much beyond \$60 for the mid-term and maybe even longer than that.

Prices have fallen here again lately because of what's happening in Texas and Oklahoma, and a new norm. Potash prices have been low for a very long time. Uranium prices are low. We didn't talk about the closure of Rabbit Lake, although

the member did mention the mine closure up north, and that's also driven by commodity prices.

Cameco, our great uranium company headquartered in Saskatoon, had a customer in Japan since the '70s. And that customer is no longer there as Japan, frankly, actually is in part moving to coal as a result of them seeking alternatives in the wake of Fukushima. And so while they're slowly considering their nuclear fleet again; that industry's also been hit hard.

And so if there were forecasts previously — and there were because we relied on them — that these commodity prices were going to come back, government took certain decisions and actions on the basis of that forecast and planning. Clearly though, the forecasters, as is the case from time to time, and all of us could be included in this . . . It hasn't been the case that there would be this comeback in prices.

So all of that to say this, Mr. Chair: we've decided that it's time now to move away from such a reliance on royalty, on resource revenues in Saskatchewan. We've decided also that we would take that opportunity because it strengthens the economy, because economists recommend it and because people like former Premier Calvert agreed.

We're going to move to lower taxes on business, corporate taxes, and income taxes and move towards consumption, and that we would also make some expenditure reductions so that we can balance our budget in three years because that's the cornerstone of our growth plan.

And so I would say that that has caused, obviously created a lot of opportunities for criticism from members opposite and stakeholders, the people in the province who are concerned. And I understand that. We understand that.

But this budget is not really about this year, this budget is about two and three and four and five years from now so that we can put ourselves on a steady track, on a stronger track, on a sustainable track that is not going to be on that roller coaster anymore. And while we do it we'll lower some taxes on income and business taxes that we've talked about here today that we know will strengthen our economy, Mr. Chair, because it's the economy that pays for all of the other questions, programming that my hon. friend raised quite rightly today, whether it's mental health, education, services in the North, highway infrastructure. The only way we can pay for those is if we have a strong economy that supports a broad tax base — at low rates, I would argue, but a broad tax base.

And so in order to do that, we've had to undertake the beginning of a three-year plan, and that has formed the basis for the decisions that we have made, Mr. Chair. But make no mistake, our commitment and dedication is to this province, and not just to the people we serve today but their kids and their grandkids. That's how we're motivated on this side of the House, and we understand we need to be accountable for the decisions we've made. And some will be critical, but I just want to assure people watching and members on that side that our motivation is about the short-, the mid-, and the long-term interests of this province, about this generation and the next. And so we'll accept the criticism and be accountable for the budget that we passed.

And again, I want to thank the member opposite for his questions today. I want to thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank our officials and through the permanent head, the head of the public service, Ms. Koch. I also want to acknowledge and thank all of those who serve in public service in the province in terms of health care and education, over on sort of the third party side of things, in executive government as well as the Crown corporations. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — We will proceed to vote the estimates, and at this time we will excuse the officials.

We will proceed to vote the estimates. Central management and services, (EX01) in the sum of \$5,648,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. Premier's office, (EX07) in the amount of \$479,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Cabinet planning, (EX04) in the amount of \$1,107,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Cabinet secretariat, (EX05) in the amount of \$451,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Communications office, (EX03) in the amount of \$1,319,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. House business and research, (EX08) in the amount of \$255,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Members of Executive Council, (EX06). This is a statutory amount of 133,000 and does not need to be voted.

Intergovernmental Affairs (EX10) in the amount \$4,243,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Francophone affairs (EX11), in the amount of \$690,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Lieutenant Governor's office, (EX12) in the amount of \$707,000, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the following 12 months ending March 31, 2018, the following sums for Executive Council: \$14,899,000.

Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. There being no further business before this committee, I would invite a member of the committee to move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. I recognize the Government House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

**The Chair:** — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

[18:30]

**The Speaker:** — I call the Assembly back to order. I recognize the Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Hart:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the committee to report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

**The Speaker:** — When shall this committee sit again? I recognize the Government House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Next sitting. It now being past the time of adjournment, this Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 18:30.]



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# GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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