

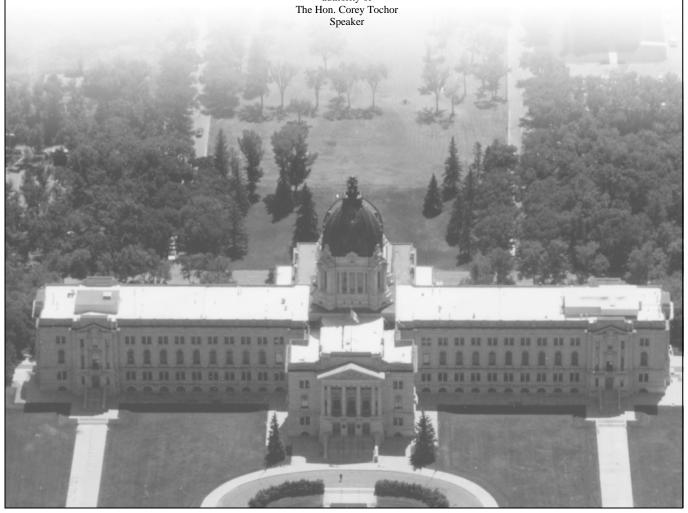
SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

DEBATES and PROCEEDINGS

(HANSARD)
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The Hon. Corey Tochor



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN November 20, 2017

[The Assembly met at 09:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is my honour today to introduce to you a group of teachers who are here in the legislature to attend the 19th annual Saskatchewan Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy. The institute began on Saturday, November 18th and will conclude on Tuesday, November 21st. I would ask all members to welcome this group to the Saskatchewan legislature.

I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with you in welcoming, in your gallery, 2017 participants in the Social Studies Teachers' Institute program here at the legislature. Their names, Mr. Speaker: Ms. Karen Hovind, Christy Harrick, Krysten Nixon, Cindy Thomson, Shelly Horrocks, Michelle Hanna, Carey Crossman, Andrew Rondeau, Ian Elliott, Kayla Henderson, Matthew McMillan, Dane Smith, Doreen Netmaker, Margot Keeler, and Mr. Michael Wolf, and Andrew Kitchen.

And with the steering committee, Mr. Speaker: Ms. Karen Blackwell-Jones, Mr. Terry Leibel, Mr. Douglas Panko, Ms. Shayna Zubko, Ms. Delise Pitman, and Mr. Matt McGuire, who's a teacher, a guest teacher from Virginia in the States. We welcome them to this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to join with the Minister of Education to welcome these social studies teachers from across the province. I hope that you've had a productive weekend, and I want to just thank you for the important work that you do in our schools across this province. I look forward to joining with the Minister of Education this evening at your closing banquet, and perhaps getting a chance to speak with each of you a little bit further. And I invite all members here to welcome these very important guests to their Legislative Assembly.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Global Transportation Hub

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, every single day we stand up in this House and we ask questions about the GTH [Global Transportation Hub], and every day the Premier tries to wave off the concerns being raised by Saskatchewan people. So let's set aside the land sales at the centre of the Sask Party's GTH scandal for just a moment.

The Premier says the GTH is creating jobs. But because of a

loophole that government refuses to close, not a single foreign company that sets up shop at the GTH will have to hire a single Saskatchewan worker.

The Premier also says government money is being well spent, but the GTH is losing money every single year. Last year alone, they budgeted for over \$15 million in revenue and a surplus of over \$4 million. But they fell \$10 million short of their planned sales and lost \$1 million of Saskatchewan people's hard-earned dollars.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Meadow Lake, his leadership campaign lasted just long enough for him to share his true feelings about the GTH. He questioned the economics and said, "We should have never been in this business in the first place." Does the Deputy Premier agree?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Economy.

Hon. Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're very proud of the immigration record we've had in this province. Over 92,000 immigrants have arrived in Saskatchewan since 2007, adding to our record population of 1,163,925 residents. From 1997 to 2006, only 18,000 arrived in Saskatchewan as permanent residents. Comparing the two ten-year periods, immigration landing rose by over 395 per cent. We're very proud of our record, Mr. Speaker, and we'll stand by it.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier can completely try to avoid all of these questions, but all he wants ... but the people who are continuing to run to lead his party say that the GTH is in the top three questions they get from every single person they talk to. And, as Rob Clarke likes to point out, everyone running for leader was either on the front bench or in the backroom for the "scandals and insider deals."

Mr. Speaker, the member for Saskatoon Willowgrove said he would "... immediately begin action to sell the GTH to the private sector." The member for Saskatoon Northwest said, "It's unacceptable to me and to the people of Saskatchewan that after all this time, there are still more questions than answers when it comes to the GTH." And he and the member for Regina University have joined the call for a full public inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, with all but one Sask Party leadership candidate calling for more transparency and answers, why has the Premier not yet even allowed Laurie Pushor to testify publicly? And if the Premier doesn't trust him to testify publicly, why does he still have a job with the government?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment, GTH, and SaskPower.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there was much that was problematic with the preamble of the Leader of the Opposition's question, but I do note, Mr. Speaker, that she did note a very fulsome leadership campaign that's taking place on this side of the House where six individuals are seeking the leadership of the Saskatchewan Party, as opposed to the members opposite where they can only

find two people to run for the leadership of the party. In fact the leadership was open for an entire year before anybody wanted to step up to run for that outfit, Mr. Speaker, and of course, people that have already run once and lost on several occasions.

With respect to the Global Transportation Hub, Mr. Speaker, this is an organization that has created over 800 jobs, over 1,800 construction jobs, over 450 million . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Over \$450 million in private investment in less than five years in operation. This is a generational opportunity for the province of Saskatchewan, and we're going to do everything we can to see that it's a success.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, they're playing pass-the-hot-potato to the ministers today, and not a single answer about Laurie Pushor — no surprise. Mr. Speaker, there is a pattern here. In every case of a scandal, the Sask Party MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] close ranks and, as the member from Meadow Lake put it, they "repeat the position of the government."

Mr. Speaker, what we need are for more of them to come clean. We know Bill Boyd and Laurie Pushor were at the centre of the GTH scandal. We know Joe Donlevy, the Premier's chief of staff, was kept in the loop. And we know that cabinet approved the sales that put millions into the pockets of Sask Party supporters.

Mr. Speaker, we also know that the Sask Party government have done all they can to stop Mr. Pushor, Mr. Boyd, and Mr. Donlevy from testifying publicly. Mr. Speaker, the Premier himself chose the member for Saskatoon Northwest to be his minister responsible for Justice, so why is he not taking his advice now when he says, "The only way to lift the cloud over the GTH is to shine a very bright light and very public light on the entire matter"? Why won't the Premier or the Deputy Premier shine this important and bright light?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Global Transportation Hub.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, we're certainly not going to take any lessons from a New Democrat party when it comes to openness, when it comes to transparency, and when it comes to accountability.

It was this government that asked the Provincial Auditor to look into this matter. It was this government that opened all of the cabinet material and made access to all the cabinet material to the Provincial Auditor, an independent officer of this Legislative Assembly. We didn't have the deputy minister to the premier, the hand-picked deputy minister to the premier, do an investigation as the members opposite did with the SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company] matter. That's not what we did.

We opened this up to the Provincial Auditor, an independent officer of this legislature. And the Premier has committed, Mr. Speaker, that once the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] investigation is complete, that he hasn't ruled out taking further action on this matter. So we will not be listening to the advice of the members opposite who have a very poor track record when it comes to openness and accountability and transparency.

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

Regina Bypass Project and Land Acquisitions

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, that minister can say what he wants, but we know the Premier is on his way out and the people trying to replace him are clearly concerned about the Sask Party's scandals. Mr. Speaker, most people already know that the Sask Party handed a \$400 million project to a foreign conglomerate and then let it balloon to a massive \$2 billion. It's taking up 60 per cent of this year's total highway budget. But that doesn't include the significant amount of land the government had to expropriate for this project. And, Mr. Speaker, even though millions of Saskatchewan taxpayers' dollars were spent, we don't know from whom the land was bought and which sections were expropriated.

Mr. Speaker, that information is public, but unless the minister steps in, it will take a lot of time and taxpayers' money to get a hold of it. The minister has the power to help. If the Sask Party are genuinely proud of this project, will the minister ensure that all of this public information is made readily available?

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

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm getting tired of hearing the rhetoric from across the way, Mr. Speaker. This is not a \$400 million project. This is a \$1.8 million project. This has gone from 3 overpasses to 12 overpasses, Mr. Speaker. It has gone from over 50 kilometres of highway infrastructure; it has gone to 40 kilometres of twinned lane and 50 kilometres of access lanes, Mr. Speaker.

This is a major project for the province of Saskatchewan. It's the largest infrastructure project we've had in the province's history, Mr. Speaker. It is going to create economic development in the Global Transportation Hub. And it's going to allow traffic to flow around the city of Regina in a safe manner, and it's going to give safe traffic to the transient people moving in from Balgonie, White City, Emerald Park that are driving into Regina to do their work, Mr. Speaker. This is a great project for the province of Saskatchewan.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, question period isn't about Whac-A-Mole of the ministers over there. This is about getting the right minister up to answer the question.

This is a question about public access to information through the land registry. We're talking to the Minister of Justice, not the Minister of Highways. We're talking about millions of dollars of land purchased with Saskatchewan people's tax dollars. Seventy-two parcels of land were expropriated and 112 more parcels were purchased outright, but we don't know and we can't get the information on which are which or who owned them. Saskatchewan people deserve to know how their money is being spent and who's profiting on this megaproject.

The Sask Party say they have nothing to hide about these deals, so I ask again: will the Minister of Justice work with us and the office of the public registry administration to make sure the information of the land purchased for the Regina bypass is made public and accessible so Saskatchewan people can learn the truth?

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

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Mr. Speaker, once again I want to say this is a major project for the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. This has gone from a \$400 million project — which they think it was, which was only on the east side of the city — to a \$1.8 million project for around the bypass around the city of Regina. It has gone to 12 overpasses, Mr. Speaker; 40 kilometres of twinned highway, Mr. Speaker; and 50 kilometres of highway access off this bypass, Mr. Speaker.

It is a major project for the province of Saskatchewan but more importantly, Mr. Speaker, this is a safe project for everyone living on the east side of Regina that wants to commute in to the city and for businesses to do business out there, Mr. Speaker. There's over 800 jobs in the community of Emerald Park that are commercially related where people are working and thriving in this province, Mr. Speaker. This is a good project for the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Support for Treaty Education

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of agreement, including from the Premier, that the minister had to apologize for her statements made during her Throne Speech response. And she did make several apologies, but none of them were for her actual statements. When I pointed out the confusion the minister was causing with her non-apologies, she said that she apologized for "... any misinterpretation or any intentions or confusion that resulted from ... [her] comments."

Mr. Speaker, she's being accused of calling treaty education into question and drawing equivalencies between the experience of Western Europeans and indigenous people. She is sorry that other people misinterpreted her, and is sorry that they were confused. Mr. Speaker, that's not an apology. If the minister can't stand in this place and take full responsibility for her own words, why does she think that she deserves to be the minister in charge of our kids' education?

[09:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I would like to thank the opposition, people working in House services, the staff of the building that made the shift in times possible for today, Mr. Speaker. There's a saying that you can do anything with consent, but there's also a lot of people that have to put the paper, the organization, everything. So I'd like to use this opportunity to thank everybody that worked together to make that . . . [inaudible].

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the member's question, the minister has apologized and has apologized unequivocally for everything that took place. Mr. Speaker, this government and the minister stands fully behind treaty education. We have it throughout our school system. We have in every school in the province, Mr. Speaker. That is the position of the minister. That is the position of the government, and, Mr. Speaker, that will remain the position of this government and this province.

Mr. Speaker, we've had ongoing discussions with First Nations leaders, Mr. Speaker, and we're on a path towards reconciliation and we're fully supportive of that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Beck: — I'm glad to hear that that's the path we're on, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that the Minister of Education is fully on that path as well. But every time she talks about treaty education, she sounds like the member from Meadow Lake who admitted he was just "repeating the position of the government."

What does she actually believe? We've all heard stories about that, but let's look at her comments from the Speech from the Throne this month. While discussing the infusion of treaty education and the need for context, the minister said:

And if you don't know that 230 years ago French revolutionaries called their movement Citizenship, or that later Maoists were very partial to school children singing indoctrination songs, or that the key tenet of cultural Bolshevism was prominently displaying ideological slogans in schools, how do you know what rights, responsibility, and respect are . . .?

Mr. Speaker, last week the minister finally and reluctantly admitted there was no equivalency between what her ancestors faced when they came here and what indigenous people faced. What equivalency was she trying to draw between Bolshevism and treaty education?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the minister apologized for the statements that were made. The minister clarified the statements that were made. Mr. Speaker, this government supports treaty education. This government supports the relationship that we have with First Nations. This government supports the relationship that we have with the Métis people in our province. There are ongoing issues that we have to work with them. We will continue to work through those issues, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're not going to stand by and let the members opposite pick and choose from words that were made in a statement where people talk about their family, where they talk about their history. Mr. Speaker, we support this minister. We support the relationships that we have with First Nations and Métis people in our province. That is where our government is going, Mr. Speaker.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, that's where this government is going and, Mr. Speaker, we'd like to urge the members opposite to join with us and continue to develop the relationship that we have with First Nations and Métis people in our province.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, we are fully on board to continue with that relationship, but there is some accounting for here. Those were the minister's words and they're not mine. She was implying that teachers are failing and that treaty education was pushing out other lessons. She went on to express her frustration about the teaching of "rights, responsibility, and respect."

Mr. Speaker, she made it clear that she is upset that rights, responsibility, and respect are in the curriculum as "intentional, explicit mandating." Mr. Speaker, she then asked, "How can you analyze them in their fullest, most critical context?" Mr. Speaker, that coming from a minister who still hasn't accepted responsibility for her own words or shown respect to those that she offended.

In her speech, the minister quoted an October 30th *Globe and Mail* column, but she missed some important context from that article. The author of that article ended with "When it comes to shaping young minds in particular, we should praise science and call out distortions of truth on both sides."

Mr. Speaker, if the minister agrees with this column that she cited, how does she justify not accepting responsibility and stepping down?

 $\label{eq:The Speaker: Minister of Education.} The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.$

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Mr. Speaker, again I apologize and reaffirm the commitment of this government to unequivocally support continued, mandated treaty education in the schools of this province so students will continue to be taught treaty along with their regular subjects, Mr. Speaker.

The First Nations and Métis education fund, Following their Voices, Help Me Tell My Story, the invitational shared services initiative, and the increase in pre-kindergarten and other childhood programs — these are all a testament to our commitment to increase First Nation engagement and success. And this year we have seen moderate success, Mr. Speaker. We are proud, proud of the fact that in 2016-17, 43.2 per cent of First Nations and Métis students graduated on time, compared

to only 35 per cent in 2012. This is the highest graduation rate in over 20 years, Mr. Speaker. There is still work to do, but let's try to do it together.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Access to Bus Service

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, in three separate elections, the Sask Party promised they wouldn't sell off our Crowns. Then of course they scrapped STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company]. They brought in Bill 40, and now of course they're selling off STC piece by piece. They say it's different because it was a wind-down.

Well May 3rd of this year, Mr. Speaker, the Premier admitted that they needed Bill 40 to do what they did to STC, our Crown that binds us all together. The people of Saskatchewan then spoke out. The Premier said, "We've heard you." Yes, Mr. Speaker, on October 24th he took to Facebook and promised, and I quote, "Our government is repealing Bill 40." And just two days later, he said again that he doesn't think wind-down counts. So they're keeping that part of Bill 40, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the routes have been on the auction block, the depot in Regina has just been sold, and the buses are up for sale. That Premier said they were listening, and he made a promise. So why are they ignoring Saskatchewan people's clear intent and breaking their promise yet again?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment, GTH, SaskPower, and SaskWater.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think, as the minister has indicated on a number of occasions, the wind-down of STC was not an easy decision to make. It has been a challenge for governments going back a number of years, the fact that it was not profitable and it was not going to be profitable ever. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I could say that it hasn't made a profit, STC had not turned a profit in my lifetime, literally in my lifetime.

It was a tough decision. It was reviewed and explored by various ministries and in the end it was decided that the money that was being spent on a subsidy, which was estimated to be up to \$100 million over the next five years, that it wasn't ... We weren't able to continue forward with it, and so that's why we made what is a difficult decision.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, in a well-hyped Facebook video, the Premier looked Saskatchewan people right in the monitor and stubbornly refused to admit he was wrong. But he did admit the people disagreed. He said, "You believe the sale of any stake, any part of a Crown corporation, is privatization . . ."

Mr. Speaker, mental health counsellors, indigenous leaders, community members are speaking out. They're worried Saskatchewan will get our own highway of tears. We've all heard or read the stories. Since those members voted to scrap STC, people are facing harassment, assault, and even worse while hitchhiking.

Mr. Speaker, they promised in three elections, and just last month, that they would not privatize. They said they understood that that meant any part of a Crown. STC was a Crown corporation that belonged to all of us. It wasn't a business. It was a service that saved lives. Now looking at the real human consequences, how can they justify scrapping STC instead of saving it, saving lives, and keeping their promise to scrap Bill 40?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment, GTH, SaskPower, and SaskWater.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — With all due respect to that member, he was a minister of the Crown on this side of the House when that government closed routes, and all of those things would apply to people living on those routes who no longer have the service. In my constituency, communities all across my constituency in the Big Muddy Valley had their routes closed.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, for anybody in this province who had a route closed — and in 1993 and 1994 there were over a dozen routes closed — for those people, that meant the bus company was shut down. In effect it was shut down. So if that member can stand and say that all of those things are true today in terms of what people face without having a bus company, then surely it would have been true in 1993 and 1994 and every other year that the NDP [New Democratic Party] shut the bus company down.

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

Usage of Government Email

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier seems to have gotten used to his government email server being broken, and even though he promised that he would not use it again, he now says there is nothing wrong with him using his partisan email account or even a Gmail account for government business.

Mr. Speaker, no matter how you feel about keeping a promise, surely we can all agree that the Premier, any premier, should be able to count on their government email account to do their job, even though there's no proof it was down for two weeks in September. That's what the Premier's office claims.

So can the minister responsible for government emails, the Minister of Central Services, please update the people of Saskatchewan on what work her ministry has done to fix the problems with the Premier's government email account and to investigate and address any issues with reporting issues?

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Would the member who asked the question

please have the respect to listen to the response from the minister ... [inaudible interjection] ... Whoa. And on the government side, please be respectful for members opposite. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The system that we use or have used in the past and up till very, very recently is a system of taking tapes and having them transcribed by an outside agency, the same system, Mr. Speaker, that was used under the members opposite.

So to update the members in this House here today with respect to the tapes — the recordings, the emails, whatever the case may be — technology has changed. And as a result of that, we have now taken to improving how we're capturing the information and storing the information, Mr. Speaker.

In the past what has happened is that the tapes — the tapes, Mr. Speaker, and I know that's somewhat of a foreign word here in today's world — were sent out to a company in Toronto to extract the information. Hence the huge cost. That was the same procedure that was used by the members opposite when they were in government, Mr. Speaker. So today we've started a project with respect to the information that we have captured, and we're moving it into the cloud so that it will keep information in a better way, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, I encourage the minister to listen to the question. We weren't asking about storage. We were asking about complaints.

Here are the facts, Mr. Speaker. The Premier says he was using the Sask Party email or even Gmail for government business. The Premier promised to stop using his private email, but then he used it again. The Premier's office told the media his government email wasn't working for the better part of two weeks in September, but there are no records at either Executive Council or Central Services that show a complaint was even made in September, let alone one that shows his email was down. No records at all, Mr. Speaker. This is disturbing to say the least.

[10:00]

Mr. Speaker, what kind of government are they running if they can't even get the Premier quasi-reliable email service? Is the Minister for Central Services not concerned at all?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that we don't have question period every morning. They're a feisty, scrappy lot today.

But I would say this to the member opposite: the Premier has answered this question, and has answered it any number of times. He's indicated that he will make his best efforts to ensure that he uses the government email server. There are times, for whatever reason, he has not had access to that. Whether it has to do with his device, whether it has to do with things in Central

Services, he periodically will use his own.

He has indicated that when he uses his own, that all of that will be made available through Archives. They're subject to FOI [freedom of information]. Not hiding a thing. Mr. Speaker, when they ask questions about those things, they don't remove the header when they send out the responses. They just show, that's what it was. There's nothing to hide there. They're welcome to the information any time they want it.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do now move that this House adjourn for the day.

The Speaker: — Pursuant to an order made Thursday, November 16, 2017, this Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 10:01.]

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Hon. Steven Bonk

Minister of the Economy
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan
Minister Responsible for Innovation
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Minister of Advanced Education

Hon. Larry Doke

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Water
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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
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