



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

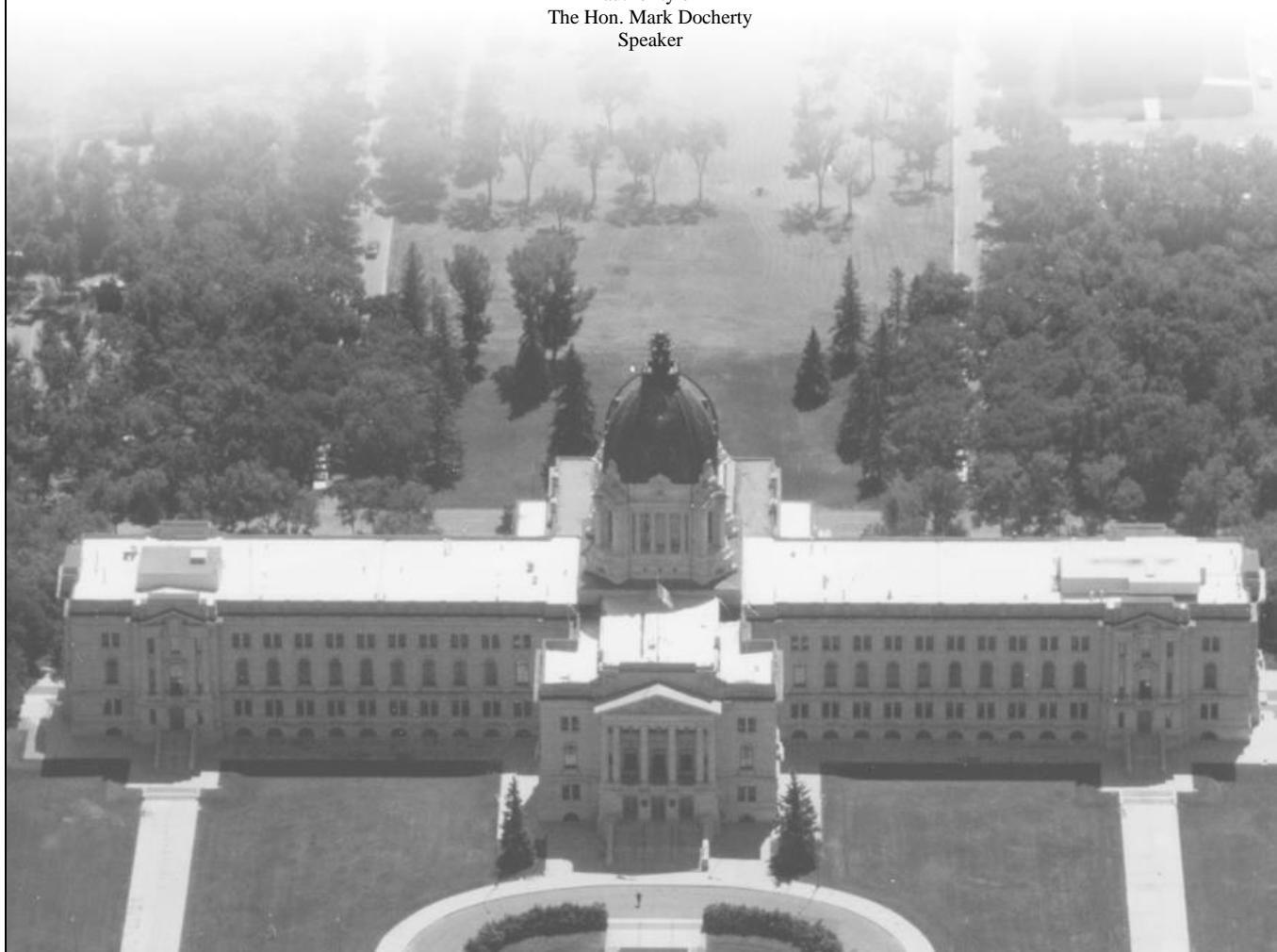
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Mark Docherty
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
3rd Session — 28th Legislature

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Leader of the Opposition — Ryan Meili

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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)

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 48; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 13

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to this Assembly, I'd like to introduce a number of guests seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask them all to just give us a wave when I introduce them, Mr. Speaker. We have a number with us today. We have Kathleen Brown. We have Marilyn Williams, Ken Williams, Maureen Eckstein, Rita Grant, Cindy Rottenbucher, Bridgette Keeler, and Anne Chase, who particularly has been a great source of advice to my chief of staff and I, Mr. Speaker, on this topic.

Mr. Speaker, today is World Ovarian Cancer Day, and these advocates are giving a voice to women who are diagnosed with this terrible disease. Mr. Speaker, during members' statements we're going to hear from the Premier on this. Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the Assembly to please join with me in welcoming these guests to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join in with the minister opposite in welcoming these guests from Ovarian Cancer Canada on World Ovarian Cancer Day. We know that 2,800 Canadian women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer each year, and that we need significant improvements in detection and research to improve outcomes for women.

I would like to welcome Kathleen, Maureen, Ken, Rita, Cindy, Bridgette, and Anne to their Assembly today, and ask all members to join me in welcoming them.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome in your gallery Katie Emde, who has brought in a couple of other advocates from the community that are fighting for autism supports, Mr. Speaker. And we had the opportunity at lunchtime, myself and the member for Regina Lakeview, to attend a rally outside on the steps of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, where a number of individuals spoke.

We had the opportunity to hear from families who have been affected and who live a daily struggle without receiving the supports that they need for their families to be able to live happy and healthy lives. I would like to thank them for the advocacy that they are doing, and ask all members to join me in welcoming them to this Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming the advocates for autism here, Mr. Speaker. Certainly their voices are important

as we move forward in dealing with this, Mr. Speaker. And I'd ask all members to please join with me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure I introduce another group from the Yorkton Regional High School back home, grade 10 history students from the Yorkton Regional High School, with their teacher, Perry Ostapowich, Mr. Speaker. You know, Perry is a great community leader, very involved, a very strong teacher, a very informative teacher. He's brought — and I think this is his 20th group from the Yorkton Regional High School — he's brought eight groups when he was in Melville. Along with Perry is Steve Farquharson from Saltcoats, currently covering in the Yorkton Regional High School, and their bus driver, Malcolm McCormick.

Mr. Speaker, with the 17 students we have, as is customary with this group, they'll usually contact me and ask for an introduction. So the ones that did contact me over the last 24 hours was Jorah Trost, Trinity Schneider, Jesse Horsman, Madison Shindle, Haley Desnomie, Jersey Zawatsky, and Austin Andres whose mom and dad, Brook and Vanessa, are very good friends of mine.

So I ask all members to welcome these individuals to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with members on both sides in introducing a number of guests that we have with us today. I want to join with the member for Saskatoon Fairview in welcoming Katie Emde to her Legislative Assembly. Many of you will know that Katie is a mom to three, lives in the Midale area, has been a tireless advocate for families and children with ASD [autism spectrum disorder] in our province. And I want to thank her for her tireless efforts on behalf of all of those families and all of those children.

With her today are Rosemarie Hemmelgarn and Kathleen Nimegeers. I'd like to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly and invite all members to do so as well.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome all of the members here, all of those in the gallery who are here to draw attention to ovarian cancer. But I want to point out one special face that I see up there. We have Maureen Eckstein with us today. Maureen is a constituent of Regina Lakeview and is someone who . . . I don't know, she says she's retired, but I'm not sure that she knows it because her schedule is something that would rival anyone on the floor of this Assembly. Not only does she show up at everything, she usually has her wardrobe coordinated to match whatever the sign is today, and I see she's got her teal on. Maureen is just one of the kindest and most hard-working people that you'll ever want to meet. And I want to welcome her to her Legislative Assembly and just thank her for all the work that she does in our community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce 14 grade 7 students up in the west gallery from the Wymark School, Mr. Speaker. And with them today is Kristi Schwartz, Danna Mulhall, Lori Weiss, Dennis Lagasse, and Steve Ebner. So I'd like all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure again to introduce the mayor of Grenfell, Rod Wolfe. I think he'd be in the running for probably the best mayor in the province at this point, the amount of good work he's done in that town to promote economic development and especially the hard work he's been doing with Grenfell long-term care centre there. And just his advocacy is something that we can all admire. And he's here today with his daughter, Raeanna. So I'd like all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

And sitting next to them is someone I take great pleasure in introducing. My daughter, Emma, is here today. Emma's school group was here this morning taking a tour of the Legislative Building, and she forgot to get on the bus. So she's still here with us today, and it's a pleasure to have her here. I'm a little bit nervous because she said the reason she missed the bus was she wanted to hold her MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] to account, so she's here to see what we do. And I'd just like all members to welcome her to her Assembly.

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

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member from Moosomin in welcoming Emma Bonk to her Legislative Assembly. I've had many conversations with Emma over the years. And as people here know, I have a soft spot for bright, young women. I'd just like to say to her that I will not only welcome you to your Assembly, but we're going to save a spot for you on this side of the House, preferably right here. So please join everyone in welcoming Emma to her Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member opposite and welcome the mayor to his Legislative Assembly.

But I'd also like to join with the two members and welcome Emma to her Legislative Assembly. It's always a pleasure to see her. I've had the opportunity to get to know her over the past couple of years; my favourite of the Bonks, I would say by far, Mr. Speaker. She's parted me with some of my money over the past few years, be it eggs or lamb.

She's a young, professional businesswoman. She's an esteemed debater and she's an amazing speech giver, Mr. Speaker. She's had the opportunity to give a few speeches in front of us. I think one time she followed her father or preceded her father, and I dare say she blew him out of the water in terms of quality and capability, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to add that we're also saving a spot for her on

our side, but that will be on that side when we form government with her as the NDP [New Democratic Party] member for Moosomin, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's such a pleasure to see Emma. I ask all members to join me in welcoming her to her Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all the members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce some good friends of mine from Calgary, Dean and Sharon Zeeben, up on the west side there. Dean and I grew up together. We played a lot of sports together and we never mastered too many of them. But we did go school together, the odd time.

Dean and I and Sharon, we've gone on about 25 holidays together over the past years and we still seem to get along and we go together every winter. In fact we went this winter and we're planning on another one this year.

This is their first time here, so I'd like everyone to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly. Also, just on record, they were in Calgary and they have a cabin out at Crystal Lake, and I almost had them moving to Crystal Lake until the recent election in Alberta.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Pasqua.

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you and to all the members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce 27 grade 7 and 8 students from École Harbour Landing School, Mr. Speaker. I ask all the members to join me, welcome all these students in their Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: — Holy smokes, we've got another 15, 20 minutes left. What are we going to do with all this time?

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of this province that are opposed to the federal carbon tax.

The prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following actions: 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, the petition is signed by citizens from Biggar, Borden, and Fort Qu'Appelle. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of residents of northern Saskatchewan. There is a definite need for a new long-term care facility in La Ronge and

area. And according to the Croft report of 2009, it shows the area is in code red.

There was 500,000 allocated for planning that was spent, and the plan has been ready for years. Seniors are waiting 165 days on average for a bed and are being shipped hours away from loved ones.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Sask Party government treat northern Saskatchewan's senior citizens with respect and dignity and immediately invest in a new long-term care facility in La Ronge.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by many residents of northern Saskatchewan. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again to present petitions on behalf of concerned people and local businesses and communities from all across Saskatchewan, as it relates to the Sask Party government's imposition of the PST [provincial sales tax] onto construction labour. What we saw here was the Sask Party government seeing a slowing economy and they chose to hit the brakes, Mr. Speaker.

Of course this is the epitome of a job-killing tax. The consequences speak for themselves. Permits are down all across Saskatchewan. Important projects have been shelved. And sadly, thousands of hard-working tradespeople have lost their jobs, lost their livelihood. So many that have been forced to move outside of Saskatchewan in pursuit of employment, Mr. Speaker, a loss for them and a loss for our province. And of course households that have been hit hard by the PST, Mr. Speaker, hurting our economy, hurting them. In fact households are paying more, almost \$800 more per year than they were just five years ago.

[13:45]

And the prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to stop saddling families and businesses with the costs of their mismanagement and immediately reinstate the PST exemption on construction and stop hurting Saskatchewan businesses and families.

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents from Southey and Regina. I so submit.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to present a petition on the Regina bypass project. The people who have signed this want to bring to our attention a number of things. Very few details about the bypass project are publicly available, despite it being the costliest infrastructure project funded by taxpayers in the province's history.

Ministry officials identified several major deficiencies in the project in an email that was released in an FOI [freedom of information], and yet they continue to refuse to release this list of what they identified as major. In the Assembly, the previous minister of Highways referenced the breach of an aquifer in Wascana Creek as an example of one of those major deficiencies. However, our current Minister of Highways has repeatedly stated on record that there are no major deficiencies on this bypass.

The Saskatchewan people will be paying for this piece of infrastructure for the next 30 years. The interest costs are already rising, Mr. Speaker, and in the interest of government transparency, these contradictory statements require immediate clarification.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to immediately release a full, unredacted copy of records detailing all minor and major deficiencies identified in the Regina Bypass Project to date.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition today are from the fair city of Saskatoon. I so submit.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to present a petition calling for access to gender reassignment surgeries in our province. These citizens wish to bring to our attention that the Government of Saskatchewan states it is committed to meeting the health needs of all residents; that gender reassignment surgeries, including vaginoplasties and phalloplasties are deemed medically necessary, but the Ministry of Health has listed vaginoplasties and phalloplasties as specialized surgical services, requiring prior approval for out-of-province care; that Saskatchewan patients seeking vaginoplasties and phalloplasties must seek out-of-province care; that there's an over two-year-long waiting list to access the authorized health and psychiatric authorities. And that the WPATH [World Professional Association for Transgender Health] standards of care states that the requirements of mental health professionals able to make referrals of hormone replacement therapy are identical to those required to make surgical referrals for GRS [gender reassignment surgery].

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan direct the Ministry of Health to delist vaginoplasties and phalloplasties as specialized surgical services and remove the requirement to seek a recommendation from a ministry-authorized health or psychiatric authority.

There is a big stack of this petition that I'm presenting today, Mr. Speaker. It's signed by individuals from Regina, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Balgonie, Edenwold, Duck Lake, Young, Craven, Vibank, and Bulleya. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Northeast.

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have here a petition from residents of Saskatchewan who are concerned about the very building blocks of life. Mr. Speaker, they are concerned that the federal government is proposing to pass regulations to enable plant breeders to give them complete control over plant varieties registered after 2015.

Mr. Speaker, these proposals would enable the big international seed companies to charge farmers a royalty, a trailing royalty on seed that they've grown themselves and want to use again to plant a crop. And it would enable these companies to keep charging a royalty again and again, every time the farmer wants to reuse the seed that they've grown on their farm.

Mr. Speaker, these proposals also would enable companies to charge an end royalty, an end point royalty on every tonne of crop that the farmers grew from that seed. Mr. Speaker, these proposals are being pushed on farmers as though they will increase research. But, Mr. Speaker, the petitioners want to bring to our attention that the existing model of farmer-funded and public research has worked well and has generated returns of 20 to 1 for the Canadian public and for farmers.

Mr. Speaker, these proposals don't give any guarantee to farmers that the royalties that they pay will result in any research. They don't give farmers any guarantee that the royalties they pay would value or benefit farmers. And they don't give any guarantee that the research would even be on Canadian crop varieties.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to advocate on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers with the federal government to ensure that the rights of farmers to freely use their own seed be established and maintained, that end-point and trailing royalties not be imposed on farmers, and that any seed research that is paid for by farmers will be controlled and directed by farmers.

Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition are from the good communities of Assiniboia and Yorkton. Mr. Speaker, I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Rosemont Mount Royal Community Association Makes a Difference

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, on April 28th, along with my son William, I once again had the pleasure to attend the Annual Rosemont Mount Royal Family Day at Martin Collegiate. The event was packed, Mr. Speaker, with hundreds attending. From bouncy castles to games, crafts, face painting, and dessert, it was a perfect family event. William had a riot with the fun and friends, while I helped serve up the strawberry shortcake with volunteers.

The event's success is only made possible by the dedicated Rosemont Mount Royal Community Association and the legion

of community volunteers they've organized. The community association is vital to the community. Last year 3,500 people participated in association programs, with more than 500 hours of programming supported by 1,500 volunteer hours. This effort is remarkable. It strengthens community and I know it makes a difference in countless lives.

Last year was the 30th anniversary of this association. It was a pleasure to join in celebration at the Rick Hansen Park last spring. This association is working hard to connect community, to assess community needs, and to partner with surrounding communities. And they've also been working with the Regina Police Service to address crime. This is important work that I'm proud to support.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all in this Assembly to join with me to celebrate the extraordinary community-building efforts of the Rosemont Mount Royal Community Association and to offer our thanks to its impressive leadership and volunteers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier, the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

World Ovarian Cancer Day

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge May the 8th as World Ovarian Cancer Day. Founded in 2013, this day was established to bring awareness to this terrible disease. Ovarian cancer kills five Canadian women each and every day, and there's no reliable screening test or vaccine to prevent this. Across Canada, 2,800 Canadian women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer each year, including 75 women from this province.

Mr. Speaker, we are joined here today by a group of survivors and advocates from Ovarian Cancer Canada who have given a voice to the women who struggle with this terrible disease. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it was their advocacy and their leadership that contributed to the decision to transfer responsibility for gynecological oncology to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. This decision will allow the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency to hire a dedicated physician leader to manage this service to enable better coordination of all aspects of treatment, and will assist in recruiting new gynecological oncologists to our province.

Mr. Speaker, we know there is much more work to do, but with the guidance from the women that are here today and others, we are confident that we can improve this important service for all Saskatchewan women. Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in recognizing today as World Ovarian Cancer Day. Thank you.

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

Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, May is Early Childhood Education Month, and May 8th is Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day. This is an opportunity to show our appreciation to all of the professionals who work so hard to deliver care and education to our youngest citizens.

Early childhood education is the foundation for a lifelong educational journey. Early childhood educators are invested in the growth and the development of young children, and it's important that we take time to properly thank those who dedicate their lives and care to this education.

This is even more important in our province where our record in early learning support simply needs to improve. Mr. Speaker, the access to child care in our province is still an issue. Our regulated child care centres can only accommodate about 15 per cent of children aged five and under, and the cuts to preschool programs for children with intensive needs has resulted in increased pressure for early learning childhood centres. And despite the incredible work that they do, early childhood educators are chronically underpaid.

So much still needs to be done to invest in early learning and child care programs. Early childhood educators are at the forefront of this effort. They deserve to be properly remunerated, and they deserve appreciation not only on May 8th but every day.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating these important professionals for the incredible work that they do with our next generation.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Buckland Fire and Rescue Fundraiser

Hon. Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak about an annual event in Prince Albert. Buckland Fire and Rescue has been saving lives in the RM [rural municipality] of Buckland and greater area for 50 years now.

Like many service organizations and volunteer fire departments, Buckland Fire and Rescue is very self-sufficient. Their good old-fashioned prairie ingenuity has helped them adapt and flourish for generations. They construct, acquire, maintain, and upgrade their own equipment and buildings. Their membership is volunteer based, so creating a welcoming and effective environment is of utmost importance.

Buckland Fire and Rescue's primary focus is on all types of fire suppression, but over the years they have broadened their approach to include other areas of protective services, such as motor vehicle accidents, embankment rescue, and search and rescue.

Last month Buckland Fire and Rescue celebrated their 10th annual Surf N' Turf, and I was pleased to attend again this year. The volunteer organizers never cease to impress with their top-notch steak and lobster and first-class entertainment for the evening's dance. This enjoyable event continues their history of community service and fundraising for life-saving initiatives.

I now ask all members to join me in thanking Buckland Fire and Rescue, a service group which is dear to my community and my heart.

Thank you.

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

Swinging with the Stars Fundraiser

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this weekend I attended a fundraiser that's really dear to my heart, which is Hope's Home Swinging with the Stars. I'm very pleased to announce that this year the final number donated to Hope's Home was over \$270,000, which breaks all the records from past events. Mr. Speaker, the donations collected at the event will go towards the important work at Hope's Home, providing care for children with complex medical needs.

We were entertained with hip hop, salsa, contemporary, and even a really electric traditional dance by Chief Cadmus Delorme from Cowessess First Nation and his professional partner, Shana Pasapa, which had the whole room on their feet.

This year's winners were Zack Evans and his partner, Maria Kary. I must say, Mr. Speaker, Zack plays for the Riders and is actually one of the most graceful and talented and flexible dancers we've ever seen on the Swinging with the Stars stage.

The night's fan favourite went to Shawn Hazen, the founder and CEO [chief executive officer] of Lumeca Health, and his partner, Jess Smith from *CTV Morning Live*.

I'd like to send a special thank you to Kelsey Stewart and the organizing committee for putting on yet another really incredible event. And I now ask all members to join me in thanking the celebrities, professional dancers, and all of those who attended Swinging with the Stars this year, and thank them very much for the support of Hope's Home and medically fragile children in our community. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Rebels Win Championships

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Assiniboia Pee Wee Rebels hockey team, along with their family and community members, celebrated a huge accomplishment upon closing their season the final week of March. The Rebels won the Southwest Saskatchewan Hockey League championship, and the SHA [Saskatchewan Hockey Association] PeeWee B provincial championship after posting a perfect regular season record.

Their season ended on a high note after a 7 to 3 win over Eastend in the SSSL [Southwest Saskatchewan Hockey League] final, sweeping the best-of-three series, Mr. Speaker, and an 8 to 1 two-game total-point provincial final win over Kindersley. The Rebels established a 27 to 0 record in their regular season, finishing 17 points ahead of the tied second-place teams.

[14:00]

Their accomplishments throughout the entire season were chalked up to a team effort, the head coach, Lane Jepson, Mr. Speaker. Different players stepped up to help and work hard where they saw fit, and all players showed up ready to play every day, which ultimately paid off in the end.

I now ask all members to join me in congratulating the players,

coaches, and parents of the Assiniboia Pee Wee Rebels hockey team for their hard work and effort in winning both championships and achieving a perfect season. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon University.

Remembering Jean Vanier

Mr. Olason: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With a heavy heart, I rise today to announce the passing of Jean Vanier at 90 years old. Mr. Speaker, Jean Vanier was a philanthropist whose charity worked to help improve conditions for the developmentally disabled in many countries across the world for more than 50 years. Pope Francis has been informed of his death and is praying for him and his community.

Mr. Speaker, Jean Vanier worked as a Canadian naval officer, but after a visit to a psychiatric hospital in 1964, he felt called to serve his community and opened his charity, L'Arche. L'Arche is an alternative living environment where those with developmental disabilities can be active participants within their community instead of hospital patients. Mr. Speaker, this charity expanded to 38 countries around the world, giving thousands a place to call home. He advocated for their rights and their independence, and has helped many live their lives to the fullest.

He will be remembered for his generous spirit and commitment to God. His legacy will live on here in Saskatchewan as we have multiple schools in the province named after him. Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to his family and community during this time.

God bless Jean Vanier, and may he rest in peace. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Measurement of Class Sizes

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Saskatchewan today we have many classrooms with 30 students or 40 students per teacher. How many? Well no one knows because this government has refused to count class sizes across the province. They're not doing their homework. They're not tracking class sizes. And it's not as though they've never done this. It's not as though it's not possible. In fact up until 2013, this government did track class sizes, and yet they stopped that activity.

My question for the Premier is this: why, when this is such an important number as our enrolment numbers are starting to climb, why stop tracking how many students are in our classes?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ensuring that our kids get the best education possible in our classrooms is a top priority for this government, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I indicated in an answer on the floor of this Assembly that the average class size or pupil/teacher ratio in this province is 19, Mr. Speaker. We know that there's classes with class sizes that are higher than that, Mr. Speaker. It's obviously a concern if

those numbers are impacting the quality of education that teachers can provide, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we provide unconditional funding to school divisions. And school divisions make the decisions, Mr. Speaker, with respect to how those funds are allocated. And we have faith, Mr. Speaker, in school divisions and administrators to make the right decisions to ensure that children are getting the proper education in their classrooms.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question is quite simple: why did they stop tracking class sizes and move to this method of calculating averages that completely downplays the level of crisis in our classrooms?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, you know, I have to disagree with the premise of that question, Mr. Speaker. To assume that classrooms in this province are in crisis is just wrong. We're very proud of the education system we have in this province. We're very proud of the professionals in our classrooms who are delivering what I think, Mr. Speaker, is the best-quality education in any system across this country, perhaps North America, Mr. Speaker. In conversations with experts in this field, Mr. Speaker, who are currently consulting as I've mentioned before, were talking about innovation in the classroom, Mr. Speaker, they comment on that.

Certainly there is more work to be done, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we are providing the best-quality education, but I'm very proud of the system that we have, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to concentrate to ensure that our children are prepared as they move through their educational journey, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is an incredibly weak answer on an incredibly important issue. Why did this government stop tracking student numbers? No explanation whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, in a time of growing enrolment and shrinking support, falling per-student funding, and classrooms that are more crowded than ever, more challenging than ever, we've got a government that's walked away from actually doing its homework, from tracking what's going on.

So if there was ever a time we needed to know what was happening, it's now, when so many teachers, so many parents, so many students are under high levels of stress in our school system. Mr. Speaker, the question is this: why did they stop tracking? And will they figure it out and start tracking again so we know how many students are in our classes.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I've commented about the quality of education we provide in this province, Mr. Speaker. Here's a statistic for the Leader of the Opposition. Since 2007-08, Mr. Speaker, for every 20 new students that have been added to

the system, that have joined our school division, Mr. Speaker, we've added an additional educational FTE [full-time equivalent]. It's a clear commitment in terms of our commitment to making sure that we're providing good quality education in our classrooms, Mr. Speaker.

And you only have to look at the last budgets, Mr. Speaker. Last year \$30 million to the operating budget; this year \$26.2 million, the largest operating budget in the history of this province, Mr. Speaker.

We have great confidence in the teachers that are teaching our children in the classrooms to deliver good quality education, Mr. Speaker. But as I've said many times on the floor of this Assembly, there's more work to be done, Mr. Speaker, and this government is committed to doing that work.

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

Funding for Education

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, this isn't about a lack of confidence in the teachers in our classroom. This is about a lack of resources in our classrooms. We know that there are more students in classrooms and the Premier and that minister can cobble together whatever numbers they want. But it doesn't respect the challenges that educational staff are facing in the classroom. This overcrowding, combined with understaffing and loss of supports caused by Sask Party government cuts, is impacting not only learning but also the safety of educational staff and students. Is the minister concerned with violence in our classrooms? And if so, why won't he fully restore adequate funding to our classrooms and keep students and teachers safe?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I've been in classrooms. I've had conversations with teachers and with school divisions, Mr. Speaker, and I understand some of the issues that classrooms are facing. It's precisely the reason why we've dedicated some funding in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker, to start talking about innovation, how we can better deliver quality education in our classrooms, how we can better fund education. And we're having those conversations, Mr. Speaker. There's certainly work to do, as I've mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, but we respect the fact that there are some challenges. But it can't be said this government isn't facing those challenges, Mr. Speaker.

We've added more funding to the education operating fund, Mr. Speaker. We're certainly moving forward in a significant way around infrastructure to meet the demands in the classrooms in the growing communities across this province. We've added significant funds to preventative maintenance, Mr. Speaker, that provides additional funding for school divisions to meet the needs on a capital perspective. But we'll continue to have conversations, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to talk about innovation so that we can make sure that we're delivering services in the classroom, Mr. Speaker, to the children of this province.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I sure wish that that minister would

have found his way to the steps of the legislature this morning to hear from educators, to hear from parents, to hear about what exactly is going on in our classrooms because he obviously doesn't get it.

According to a national study conducted by the Canadian Teachers' Federation, the growing number of violent and under-reported incidents towards teachers is often linked to the lack of critical resources and supports for students in schools. Unfortunately for Saskatchewan teachers and students, this sounds very much like the reality that they're facing in our classrooms after years of cuts by the Sask Party government.

Mr. Speaker, more than 70 schools in Saskatchewan are over capacity. The strain on our classrooms has never been greater. There are more students and complex educational needs every year, and this can lead to dangerous outcomes for educational staff and students.

Does the minister recognize the danger that his cuts have created for educators and students, and will he commit today to adequate funding for our classrooms?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, you know, I'm not sure how many times I have to stand on my feet and remind the member opposite that we have record investments in operational funding for school divisions across this province. We're certainly concerned about a number of the issues. I've heard from locals, Mr. Speaker, and I'm having conversations with my officials to deal with these very issues. And that's precisely . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Member for Lakeview, member for Cumberland, Minister of Health, come to order. Debate based on the mikes.

I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, that's precisely why we're having these conversations with our partners in education — not just teachers and trustees, but parents, Mr. Speaker. Because we want to make sure that we're meeting the challenges in the classroom. Mr. Speaker, I've met with teachers. I know some of the challenges in the classroom, and that's precisely why we're moving forward, Mr. Speaker. But it can't be said that we're not committing significant funds to education, Mr. Speaker, with the largest operating budget or the significant capital budget, Mr. Speaker.

It begs the question, Mr. Speaker: how much money should I add to the education budget? And where would we get the money from, Mr. Speaker? Would they run up their big orange credit card, Mr. Speaker, to fund education? Would they raise taxes? We're not going to do either one of those. But we're going to make sure that we adequately fund education and, as we move forward, to have an innovative conversation about innovation and delivery of classroom services and funding, Mr. Speaker. This will all come clear.

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

Funding for Post-Secondary Institutions

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, once again that minister has demonstrated that having conversations does not equate with understanding the issue.

The government likes to say that this is a balanced budget, but we know from school boards that they're short millions of dollars. These cuts and chronic underfunding are not only affecting our children, Mr. Speaker, but also university students.

The University of Regina just approved its 2019-2020 budget, and for a second year in a row, students will see a tuition fee increase of 2.8 per cent. With the government holding the purse strings and record cuts in recent years, post-secondary institutions are left to make tough choices. And once again it's students who suffer the most. When will the minister stop with the rhetoric and acknowledge that the government's choices are making it harder for students who are just trying to get ahead?

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

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the member opposite for the question. Obviously we are always concerned to see tuition increases at the University of Regina. I will say again in this House, however, that as an autonomous institution, the universities have the authority to make those decisions.

The price index of course is 1.9 per cent over the last number of years, Mr. Speaker. The enrolment has increased by 22 per cent at our institutions, Mr. Speaker. Over that same time the consumer price index has gone up by 22 per cent, and our operating funding to the universities has gone up by 53 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Over the same period of time, our student supports have gone up by 262 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, that minister points fingers at school boards and that minister points fingers at universities. Once again we get the same old tired lines.

Students in every faculty, Mr. Speaker, will be affected by this tuition increase, but especially those in the Faculty of Arts. They're already facing some of the highest tuition in Western Canada. And when students are working on the tightest of budgets, this increase will have huge impacts.

The University of Regina isn't the only post-secondary institution that is facing the consequences of this government's mismanagement. Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to properly fund post-secondary institutions in the next budget? Or will she keep letting the budgets fall short and force the shortfall onto students?

The Speaker: — The member for Canora-Pelly, please come to order. I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much, and once again I want to thank the member opposite

for the question. I guess I would say this, Mr. Speaker, that the education is an investment in which students get a very high return. And I think we're seeing a lot of evidence of that.

[14:15]

For example, Mr. Speaker, we know that students in Saskatchewan have a 92 per cent satisfaction rate with our institutions, Mr. Speaker. We also know that there's a very high employment rate for our graduates in this province, Mr. Speaker. Our post-secondary employment rate is around 84 per cent after graduation, Mr. Speaker. They also earn high wages, and much higher wages than their counterparts who don't have a degree, Mr. Speaker, something in the range of 4 to 1 per cent, Mr. Speaker. And most importantly of all, 9 out of 10 of our students are staying in this province, Mr. Speaker, which is a far cry of what was happening in the last 10 years before we got a term in office. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Long-Term Care Facility in La Ronge

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, all over the province I've seen billboards that say the Premier is standing up for Saskatchewan. But I know . . .

[Applause]

Mr. Vermette: — Go ahead, be proud. But I know he isn't standing up for the North. Northern residents have been left behind by this government, year after year. They gave some dollars to planning a long-term care centre in La Ronge, but those dollars have been long spent and there's still no commitment to build this needed centre.

To the Premier: how can you say you're standing up for Saskatchewan when you won't deliver a long-term care centre for La Ronge and area?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, definitely there has been money given for planning for the long-term care facility in La Ronge. And we do realize . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Member for Cumberland, you just asked the question. You're getting an answer. An attempt. All right? Let's continue on. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, we do recognize the need for more long-term care, specifically in the North. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, the La Ronge facility has been approved to move ahead eventually. The planning dollars were put in place. But, Mr. Speaker, as many would realize, in this budget we also did some other approvals for long-term care facilities that have been waiting longer than La Ronge, Mr. Speaker.

In fact Meadow Lake got \$12 million in this budget to move ahead over the next little while for the construction of that

facility. We're continuing to complete projects around the province that serve the whole province, specifically the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital, which will be opening this fall, and of course the Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford, which is already open, serving people throughout the province, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Construction of Road in Wollaston Lake Area

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, seniors in La Ronge are waiting 165 days and longer.

But anyway, elders in La Ronge have been forgotten by this government and so have the people of Wollaston Lake. The Sask Party promised to build an all-season road to Wollaston Lake more than a decade ago. Now spring is coming, the ice road is no longer safe, and the people will have to wait months before barge services resume.

How can the Premier say he's standing up for Saskatchewan when he hasn't delivered an all-weather road for Wollaston Lake and Hatchet Lake Dene Nation?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. You know, I'd like to point out that we've actually been working on the band with funding to try and ensure some funding for this project. We've actually put an application in for it. It's a three-phase project that includes construction of a winter road, and then an upgrade of it to a seasonal road, and the last phase would be finally an all-weather road.

We are committed to this proposal and, as I mentioned, we've put an application in to the federal government. We're actually just waiting to hear back from them on what type of approval we can have for this. And we will continue to work in partnership with both the band and the federal government on this road. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Treatment for Methamphetamine Users

Ms. Chartier: — This week we learned of the horrific story of the individual whom, after a solid week of using crystal meth, was involved in a high-speed chase and eventually set himself on fire. It's a terrifying story, but one that illustrates how dangerously unique meth addiction is and how a one-size-fits-all approach to tackling this crisis won't help us get ahead of it.

Yesterday the minister quoted a letter from Dr. Peter Butt welcoming investment on budget day. Yes, any investment into mental health and addictions is positive and welcome. But this week Dr. Butt also highlighted the fact that meth addiction is different, not dissimilar to an acquired brain injury, and that we don't currently have the right kinds of supports available in our health system. We can't wait for the next budget or more federal funding to tackle this problem. The province needs to step up to

the plate today. To the minister: what's the plan today to get on top of this crisis?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned yesterday when the member asked the same question, Mr. Speaker, and I read into the record the letter that I received from Dr. Butt, this morning my office reached out to Dr. Peter Butt, who again is a well-known expert in addiction in the province, Mr. Speaker, and he confirmed that there are some treatment facilities in Saskatchewan that are working towards improving treatment for people using crystal meth.

Mr. Speaker, it was documented in that news story that there's issues surrounding this relatively new drug, Mr. Speaker. It's been on the scene for a number of years now, and all provinces are grappling with how to treat it. Essentially what it boils down to, Mr. Speaker, is the treatment for other addictions often doesn't handle the case with this drug. It needs longer treatment. As I mentioned in the scrum after questions yesterday, part of the benefit of the budget announcements we made, Mr. Speaker, the pre- and post-treatments beds, specifically the post-treatment beds, are going to be helpful.

The SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority], under the opioid Emergency Treatment Fund, will be hiring a new position, Mr. Speaker, that will help to liaise between the experts in this field and the boots on the ground, if you will, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we move forward in providing the best possible addictions treatment for people that are required.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, this issue has been building for years and this government has buried its head in the sand on it and has tinkered around the edges, including in this budget. This issue is impacting our health system, our police services, our correctional facilities, and families in every corner of this province.

Of course any desperately needed investment is welcomed, but people on the front lines are not convinced this government's efforts in this budget will make much of a dent in the crisis at all. We need treatment approaches that address the specific nature of methamphetamine use and better strategies to reach individuals who are hard to engage or living in rural and remote communities.

We know there was a tenfold, tenfold increase, Mr. Speaker, in meth use over the last five years. Where does the minister think the numbers on meth use will be next year? Does he really believe the resources that he's brought to bear in this budget are enough to address the crisis on his and his government's hands?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the whole point of when I read Dr. Butt's letter into the record yesterday, Mr. Speaker, here's part of what he said. He said, "I would like to convey my profound appreciation to you for your advocacy and commitment to mental health and addiction within

the 2019 budget.” He went on to say some other things, Mr. Speaker. He said, “This investment will spur that activity and leave a legacy of an improved system of care.”

Mr. Speaker, that’s the whole point of this. The entire nation is struggling with this scourge. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite can try and make this score some political points with it but, Mr. Speaker, the entire nation is struggling with how to deal with this.

Mr. Speaker, we provided appropriate funding. We’ve provided funding, Mr. Speaker. The renowned expert in the field has announced his appreciation for it, Mr. Speaker. We’re looking to the experts like Dr. Butt now, Mr. Speaker, to do their good work.

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

Crime Rates in Saskatchewan

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday StatsCan released their latest report on crime. It shows that again in 2017 Saskatchewan had nation-leading crime rates. For years police forces have been pointing to the spike in meth use and the drug trade as a driver of crime. But instead of a multi-pronged crime strategy to address the root causes of crime — poverty, homelessness, employment, housing, and substance abuse — this government’s crime strategy focuses exclusively on enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, we need to be doing everything we can to get the addictions crisis in our province under control. It’s clear the approach this government has been taking is not getting the job done.

What measures will be undertaken to address the root causes of crime? When will we see the smart investments that could help prevent crime in the first place?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Corrections and Policing.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government takes the issue of crime in rural and urban Saskatchewan very, very seriously. We know that crime is an issue across our province in both urban, rural, and northern communities.

I must mention, and I think the member opposite did allude to it, but these statistics are for 2017, Mr. Speaker. In 2016 we had a rural crime committee that went out and consulted to find out really what the problem was and the issue was in northern Saskatchewan. But the members opposite seem to know more about it than I do because they continue to talk.

So to help combat rural crime, as a result of the crime committee, Mr. Speaker, our government has implemented a number of initiatives: protection and response team, crime reduction teams, expansion of combined traffic safety initiatives, community safety officers, Saskatchewan crime watch. These have all been implemented within the last few years, Mr. Speaker, not to mention the recent legislation on regional policing, trespassing, and civil forfeiture.

Now let’s get into the multi . . . Oh, I’ll wait till the next question then, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, that minister can make light of this issue but this is a serious problem. Those members that worked on that provincial crime task team heard about the crisis in meth use in our province, yet we still see no crystal meth strategy from this government.

Mr. Speaker, there’s also other proven strategies that work, but this government has been bypassing solutions and cutting services instead. For example, a comprehensive gang strategy — that could keep people out of dangerous situations in the first place. We also have a shameful shortage of mental health and addictions supports in our correctional facilities. And when people leave our jails right now, they are sent back into their community with little additional reintegration supports, at serious risk of reoffending. We need to look no further to understand our nation-leading crime rates. When will this government follow the evidence and start getting our crime rates under control?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Corrections and Policing.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m going to go back to the member’s first question with respect to this multi-pronged approach. Of course, our ministry is involved in more levels than just enforcement. The northern alcohol strategy, including supporting Lac La Ronge region community alcohol management program; the hub tables throughout the province, Mr. Speaker, where all the experts get together in a variety of 12 different communities throughout the province to deal with high-risk families and individuals, Mr. Speaker, before they get arrested, before they get into our criminal justice system. Northeast youth violence reduction partnership operate in Pelican Narrows, Sandy Bay, Deschambault Lake to help deter our youth from entering gangs, as well as a number of other northern victim-based supports and programming, Mr. Speaker.

We take crime in this province very, very seriously, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to ensure that our initiatives are based on evidence and looking for the outcomes. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 617 — *The Voluntary Blood Donation Act*

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 617, *The Voluntary Blood Donation Act* now be introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Saskatoon Fairview that Bill No. 617, *The Voluntary Blood Donation Act* be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Next sitting of the Assembly.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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

Ms. Young: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 140, *The Animal Health Act* with amendment.

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

Hon. Mr. Marit: — 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.

[14:30]

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 140, *The Animal Health Act* and that the bill and its amendments be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

FIRST AND SECOND READINGS OF AMENDMENTS

Bill No. 140 — *The Animal Health Act*

Hon. Mr. Marit: — I move that the amendments be now read a first and second time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister the amendments be now read a first and a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — First and second reading of the amendments.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading. I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 140 — *The Animal Health Act*

Hon. Mr. Marit: — 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. 140, *The Animal Health Act* be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

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

Ms. Young: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 162, *The Irrigation Act, 2018* without amendment.

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

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

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 162, *The Irrigation Act* and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 162 — *The Irrigation Act, 2018*

Hon. Mr. Marit: — 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. 162, *The Irrigation Act* be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

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

Ms. Young: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 170, *The Mineral Taxation Amendment Act, 2019* without amendment.

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

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

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 170, *The Mineral Taxation Act, 2019* and that the bill be now read a third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 170 — *The Mineral Taxation Amendment Act, 2019*

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — 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. 170, *The Mineral Taxation Act, 2019* be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

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

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

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

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

That the seventh report of the Standing Committee on the Economy 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.

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. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 160, *The Trespass to Property Amendment Act, 2018* without amendment.

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

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

The Speaker: — The minister's requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 160, *The Trespass to Property Amendment Act, 2018* and that the bill be now read a third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 160 — *The Trespass to Property Amendment Act, 2018*

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I move 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. 160, *The Trespass to Property Amendment Act, 2018* be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to just enter back in briefly on Bill No. 160, *The Trespass to Property Amendment Act*, Mr. Speaker.

As we know, Saskatchewan is unparalleled when it comes to our opportunities to enjoy the outdoors — for hunters, for fishers, for birders, for photographers, for berry pickers, for hikers, Mr. Speaker. And this is also very important activity, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to economic activity and investment into rural Saskatchewan. It's part of who we are as a province. When we think of hunting and fishing in the province, we think of it as a heritage industry, Mr. Speaker, and something that our Indigenous peoples have done for thousands and thousands of years, Mr. Speaker.

Now let me certainly say, when we talk about trespass, that we fully recognize the important rights that landowners have to control access to their land. This is incredibly important, Mr. Speaker. And on this front there was an opportunity to bring forward some practical improvements, some respectful improvements for landowners, Mr. Speaker, that would have been workable. But this certainly isn't it. To be very direct, it's disgraceful, Mr. Speaker, that this government chose to bring forward and to contemplate changes to this Act without any consultation with Indigenous peoples and their leadership, Mr. Speaker. No consultation in the development of that Act, when we're talking about something that's a treaty right, Mr. Speaker, and a practice, as I've said, for thousands and thousands of years — hunting and fishing and gathering across our province.

In a time where there's a supposed awakening around reconciliation, Mr. Speaker, this is shameful. It's divisive and it's damaging. And it's also a tremendous loss to not have consulted the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, which represents over 30,000 members across the province. Full disclosure, I am a member, Mr. Speaker. But these are hunters. These are fishers. These are conservationists, Mr. Speaker, and many of them are rural landowners and farmers as well, Mr. Speaker.

You know, their practical knowledge of this industry and that very important relationship between landowner and hunters and fishers would have been invaluable to bring forward practical improvements. And they weren't consulted, Mr. Speaker. They were shut out from that process, Mr. Speaker. And after the bill had been introduced, there was some conversation, but no recognition of the real, practical knowledge they could have brought to bear. And in fact they brought forward very practical improvements that could have been made to this bill. Instead, we have this legislation.

I was tremendously disappointed as well, even after the failure to consult with Indigenous peoples, Mr. Speaker, and the failure to consult with hunters and fishers across the province, that the committee itself and the minister wouldn't allow for a hearing from the public and from organizations on this front, certainly from Indigenous peoples and the FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations], Mr. Speaker. Certainly from the wildlife federation representing over 30,000 members in the province, bigger than any political party in this province, Mr. Speaker; and certainly as well from landowning groups and agricultural groups, Mr. Speaker, from APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan] and SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and the cattlemen's association — a hearing that would include those that may be supportive of the legislation, those with concerns, those with practical suggestions, Mr. Speaker, to get this right, to not have that voice is a loss, and it sets up legislation that's flawed, Mr. Speaker.

And that's where we're at here today. As a result, this government's pushing forward legislation that's not enforceable, that's not practical, and that's no fix to the real problems that exist, that deserve action when it comes to rural crime and the biosecurity risk around clubroot, Mr. Speaker.

This government has clearly missed the mark with this legislation. And I guess I would just say I'm disappointed to no end how they've gone about this important work to such an important part of who we are as a province. I would just simply urge the government to lean on and listen and change that approach and to work with all people and all organizations across the province in the coming weeks and months. But clearly there's an opportunity to bring forward some improvements on this front. This bill simply isn't it.

The Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — On division.

Principal Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

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

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 161, *The Trespass to Property Consequential Amendments Act, 2018*, a bilingual bill, without amendment.

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

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

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 161, *The Trespass to Property Consequential Amendments Act, 2018* and that the bill be now read a third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move . . . The member for Rosemont, are you enjoying the banter? We're actually, you know, we're doing some stuff here. Want to . . . You're good? Thanks. Awesome.

We'll start with the minister may proceed to move third reading and we'll go from there.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 161 — *The Trespass to Property Consequential Amendments Act, 2018/Loi de 2018 corrélative de la loi intitulée The Trespass to Property Amendment Act, 2018*

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you. 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. 161, *The Trespass to Property Consequential Amendments Act, 2018* be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

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

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present its seventh report. I move:

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

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

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

[14:45]

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report Bill No. 171, *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019* without amendment.

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

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

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 171, *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019*, and that the bill be now read a third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 171 — *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019*

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 171, *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019* be now read a third time and passed under its title. Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal 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

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

That the seventh 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 seventh 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: — Pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on House Services.

Standing Committee on House Services

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on House Services to report that the committee has considered certain estimates and is presenting its 11th report. I move:

That the 11th report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It is moved by the Deputy Chair:

That the 11th report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Principal Clerk: — Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — I do now leave the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

[15:00]

The Chair: — I will call the Committee of Finance to order. This afternoon we will be dealing with the estimates of Executive Council. Before we start the formal proceedings, I will make my annual comments about the difference between Committee of Finance and standing committees. In this committee, Committee of Finance, it is held here in the Chamber, but this is not regarded as are committee rooms for standing committees. And there are some differences, and I will just explain them for some of our newly elected people and for the new people tuning in.

The procedure in Committee of Finance is that only members speak. Officials are not allowed to participate or speak in committee. Even though this is not a standing committee, the history of Committee of Finance is that members stand when they speak. The reasoning, I'm told, is that the cameras are adjusted for members to be standing.

General Revenue Fund Executive Council Vote 10

Subvote (EX01)

The Chair: — So with that, members, I will call the subvote as soon I get my script here. The first item of business are the main estimates of Executive Council, vote 10, found on page 57 of the Saskatchewan Estimates book. I will be recognizing the Premier, and I would ask the Premier to introduce his officials and make a short opening statement if he so wishes. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we're nearing the end of our legislative session, and that means that we've come to a point where the estimates for Executive Council are given full and proper consideration by all members of this Assembly. We've been looking forward to this afternoon for some time on this side of the House, and I'm certain members opposite have as well.

Mr. Chair, as we proceed today I'll do my very best to provide immediate answers to the Leader of the Opposition and to the people of the province and the critics who may potentially ask questions. If I don't have an answer, I'll undertake to get that answer as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, this afternoon is an opportunity for all of us in this House to provide a more detailed conversation than we otherwise

may in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. It'll be an opportunity for myself to provide some clarity with respect to some of the government policies and government positions that are here, that we are at today. And it'll also be an opportunity for the Leader of the Opposition to clarify and to provide some details with respect to the opposition's policies.

Mr. Speaker, as you said, I'll introduce my officials that have joined us here today and I have assisting me. To my left is Shannon Andrews, my chief of staff; Cam Swan, to Shannon's immediate left, the deputy minister to the Premier. To my right is Reg Downs, a special adviser to the Premier. Behind me directly is Michelle Lang, the executive director of House business and research. And to Michelle's left is Bonita Cairns, the former executive director of corporate services in Executive Council.

Mr. Chair, I'm very fortunate to serve alongside these very experienced, very capable, and very dedicated public servants in the Executive Council. And I want to thank them for the work that they do in preparing not only for today, but preparing for every day in this Assembly.

And I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the Leader of the Opposition and thank all of the members opposite for their questions throughout this sitting, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of the province, but thank them in advance for their questions that I know will come here today.

Mr. Chair, the Finance minister delivered a budget this session, a budget that has the right balance for the people of the province. Two years ago we embarked on a three-year plan to balance the budget while continuing to invest in important programs and services on behalf of the people that we serve in this province. And thank you to the leadership of the Minister of Finance, and thank you above all to the people of this province. We were able to balance that budget on schedule.

This is a budget that balances our fiscal responsibility in this province with the need that we have to invest in the future of our province and the need to invest not only in this generation, but to invest in those generations to come — our children's generation if you will — to balance that budget with no new taxes, no tax increases. This balanced budget also represents the largest investment in education in the history of the province. This balanced budget also represents the largest investment in health care in the history of the province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of this budget. I'm proud of the Minister of Finance. And I thank the people of Saskatchewan who, over the course of the last few years, placed their faith in this government to deliver on that promise to bring our province back to balance.

Executive Council continues to be mindful of our spending, our investment of taxpayers' money wisely by making every effort to keep our expenses low. We operate today with 46 fewer staff members than the previous government did in 2007; it's about a 26 per cent reduction. Overall our salary expenses for political staff is down about \$324,000 or about 26.6 per cent since 2007.

My travel expenses incurred in the Premier's office and by ministers and their staff have also been reduced over the course

of this period. In 2018 the travel costs for ministers had decreased some 58 per cent since 2006 and '07. This government has taken 83 fewer out-of-province trips compared to the previous government, a 63 per cent decrease. And since winding down our executive air service, our government has saved between 700,000 to \$1 million each and every year.

In addition, our government's 2019-20 vehicle fleet budget has further been reduced by approximately \$860,000. We've expanded the short-term private sector vehicle rentals that we are utilizing across the province, and this allows an estimated half million dollars in savings each and every year.

So just a little bit of a snapshot, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the expenses that we have made every attempt to control at Executive Council and thereby across government. I want to thank the leadership of the members of Executive Council for their continued financial stewardship on this topic.

So, Mr. Chair, without further ado, I know the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues will have many questions for myself and the government. With that I'd like to conclude my remarks, and I look forward to this discussion ahead.

The Chair: — The business before this committee, for the record, is Executive Council, vote 10, subvote (EX01) central management and services. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I look forward to this opportunity to have some vibrant debate here in this Chamber. I want to thank the Premier in advance for the answers he's able to offer us as we're posing questions of importance, try to understand better the direction of this province and some of the challenges that we face.

I want to thank the officials for being present with us today and for their support throughout this process, and thank all of those who aren't in the room but have helped prepare for today, staff on both sides. And in particular the staff of our caucus office has put a great deal of work throughout this session, including our chief of staff, Olin Valby, and his entire operation, for all of the efforts they put in to make sure we are the effective and fine-tuned opposition that you see before you, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to thank the folks at the table beside you, and those who sit at the Clerk's table every day and the work they do to make sure things run smoothly and we stay according to protocol and good process. And of course the folks at Hansard, who I understand have a new proposal to install swear jars at the desks of the MLAs. They think it's a way for us to actually balance the budget, and it's a good idea. I'd also like to thank the Pages and recognize them for the work they do each day. It's so great to see these young people in here every day. I hope that they enjoy their experience, that they learn something about how things are done. They see us at our best and at times at our worst, and hopefully they're inspired to continue to be connected to the work of this building and to try to see it continue to improve.

Mr. Speaker, we're in a difficult time in this province. There are serious challenges that we're facing, and people . . . As I travel the province, as members here travel the province we hear every day the way that people are struggling, the way it's harder to

make ends meet, and the way that choices by this government have made that more difficult — cuts to health care, cuts to education, the elimination of STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company], and the way that our Crown corporations have been saddled with debt, the tripling of our provincial debt, and the doubling of the PST. These and other choices have left hard-working people worried about their jobs, worried about their future. In particular, when you look at what's going on in education, what's happening in health care, this gives people great pause for concern.

And what we see from this government is, instead of a recognition of the way in which their decisions influence those outcomes, instead we see a desire to distract, to point fingers elsewhere, to blame others every chance we can. And I think this is an opportunity today to see a government that will actually respond, acknowledge the way in which their choices have made things more difficult, and be willing to actually tackle the problems instead of try to distract and point elsewhere. It will be willing to put people first instead of politics.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we get into some of the questions before us today, one that I'd like to ask about came up last year, and that regards legislative secretaries. Last year we saw an introduction of the largest number of legislative secretaries in the history of this legislature to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker. A big increase in numbers, a big increase in expenditures as well, and yet no particular increase in output.

So my question for the Premier is this: do we still have 13 legislative secretaries? Are they still making an additional \$3,000 per year on their parliamentary salaries? And do we also have any output? Can he elucidate for us what each of those 13 members have actually produced for the benefit of Saskatchewan people, with that extra expense?

[15:15]

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And I thank the member opposite for the question with respect to the work that is being conducted by legislative secretaries within the Government of Saskatchewan. We're at 12 legislative secretaries is my understanding at this point in time, Mr. Speaker. And they are assisting, I guess first and foremost, assisting the ministers with our engagement with not only stakeholders, but individuals across the province. They are enhancing the opportunity for communication with citizens of this province, with stakeholders of this province, with industry associations of this province, Mr. Speaker, providing that conduit for conversation directly into our ministers' offices for all sorts of groups across the province, whether it be in services that this government provides, Mr. Speaker, to the people of the province, services like education; whether it be more specific to the relationship that we have with other government entities, both within the province and outside, Mr. Speaker; or whether it be directly with industries that are driving the economy here in the province. So first and foremost they are extending the opportunities for engagement with ultimately the people that we represent, Mr. Speaker.

Second, they are compensated at \$3,000 annually, Mr. Chair. I would point out that that is actually less than the prescribed rate in legislation. The prescribed rate is 14,311 that is allowed to be compensated under the directive. We have chosen a lesser rate,

Mr. Chair. We've done that to be fiscally prudent on behalf of the people of the province. Most certainly the effort that is being put forward by these individuals is far in excess of the compensation that they're receiving. They're doing that to ensure that they are doing right by the people that they represent, not only in this case in their constituency, but doing right by the people they represent in their respective sector that they are involved in.

Last and not least, Mr. Chair, there's a number of specific initiatives and efforts that legislative secretaries are undertaking, whether that be meeting with a specific sector in a specific area of the province with respect to some challenge that may be coming forward specifically in that industry or that sector or what that may be, or whether they be leading an engagement effort with, again, a specific group of people representative of something that is important to the people of the province.

And I would point to the MLA for Canora-Pelly, Mr. Chair, and the work that he has been doing with the Minister of Education, not only in reaching out into classrooms and attending in classrooms across this province to directly communicate to the minister — who also is in classrooms across the province, Mr. Chair — but to ensure that we are talking not only to our educators but to parents, to school community councils on the challenges that we have in our classrooms.

He's also undertaken a consultation with respect to our libraries across the province that are funded through our education sector in a large part, and he has engaged with people right across Saskatchewan. And I've heard about this in the community where I live, Mr. Chair, with respect to the engagement that he has undertaken to ensure . . . given the conversation that we have had with respect to libraries and their funding over the course of the last number of years, of where, in fairness, Mr. Chair, we changed a budgetary decision a couple of years ago to ensure that we were funding the libraries in the appropriate fashion, the fashion to a level that we had traditionally done.

But there were surveys done and engagement done, led by the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Education, that resulted in about 5,800 responses that have come in. And he is continuing his work now moving beyond individual engagement into the sector engagement on how we can ensure that we are providing the adequate supports for that service, for our library services in our communities across Saskatchewan.

I would point to the work done by the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Government Relations, for instance, who also happens to be the current Chair of the PNWER group, Mr. Chair, the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region. He has done a yeoman's amount of work when it comes to engagement with SAMA [Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency], for instance, has greatly enhanced the reach of the Minister of Government Relations in ensuring that they have that direct line of communication right into his office.

But I want to point to some engagement that he has undertaken more recently outside of the province, actually, has included some travel into the US [United States]. And it comes with an initiative put forward by the federal government in the United States, and it has to do with reducing the hours in four border crossings between Saskatchewan and Montana.

I've been in contact with Governor Bullock. We have co-authored a letter advocating for those hours of operation to stay as the status quo. But the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford, the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Government Relations, has attended each and every one, I believe, of those meetings that has been held south of the border put on by the federal government in communities like Plentywood, in communities like Malta, but to do with the border crossings of Morgan, Opheim, Scobey, and Plentywood.

And I would point to the fact that one of those border crossings, an important border crossing not only for people but for commerce to travel back and forth, is the port at Plentywood, which was to be reduced by some six hours. After the engagement of this member at each of those meetings — and other members from the province, but also Americans attending those meetings, as they were on the United States side of the border — that move to reduce that border crossing by six hours was changed and it was kept at a 24-hour border crossing. Now there's a second round of consultations that are just occurring. Actually I believe they might be just finished this past day or two. And that member has been down to each and every one of those meetings for that second round of consultations.

So, Mr. Chair, I would put forward that the legislative secretaries across government are compensated at less than a quarter of the directive that is put out. And the work that they do on behalf of their ministers, but more importantly on behalf of the people that we all represent in this Assembly, far outweighs that compensation.

Mr. Meili: — It appeared off the bat that the Premier was having a little trouble tracking down who all was legislative secretaries. With the high number, it might have actually been helpful for us just to get a show of hands of who isn't a legislative secretary on that side, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, we don't see a lot of productivity there, nothing that's been public, nothing that's been released in any way that we can actually check. In fact what you've described, Mr. Premier, what you've described really is a series of junior ministers, helping out, holding the bags of the ministers, and doing so at an increased cost to the public.

And the questions that proceed from that answer are, one, it was 13 last year; who's no longer a legislative secretary? Number two, would the Premier be willing to commit to some accountability on this file and have regular reporting so that the public knows if this investment is actually worthwhile and not just the anecdotes from the Premier once a year? And thirdly — and this one I think might be a bit of a surprise, but it was a surprise to me when I read it a couple days ago — was the Premier aware that *The Legislative Secretaries Act* says that you cannot have more than six legislative secretaries hold office at any one time? Was the Premier aware that by appointing 13 he was actually breaking the law to the tune of 200 per cent?

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Chair, again I thank the member opposite for the question. We are down one Legislative Secretary as that individual is now in cabinet. Mr. Chair, the member from Estevan, now serving as the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure, is no longer a Legislative Secretary. She is a member of cabinet. That is the change from 13 to 12.

With respect to accountability, the accountability of all of the work of the members, whether you're in cabinet, whether you serve as a member of House business, whether you serve as a Legislative Secretary or as a member of caucus, it comes about each and every four years. But with respect to the work of the legislative secretaries, I think the Leader of the Opposition actually raises a point where we actually should communicate what our legislative secretaries are doing on behalf of the people in this province in their specific sector. Not just in the work that they are doing as a Member of the Legislative Assembly representing their constituents in their geographic area, but what they are doing in the specific sector that they are working with, whether that be Education, Government Relations, Energy and Resources, Environment.

I know there's been some good work done by the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of the Environment with engagement when it comes to moving forward with a real plan on our landfills across this province. And there's some good engagement going on with not only municipalities but communities across the province with respect to how we are going to ensure that we have safe landfills here in the province, safe and it's economic for us to continue to keep them safe.

So we need to do a better job of telling our story of what our legislative secretaries actually are doing on behalf of the ministers that they are working with, but on behalf of the people that they represent. And we will look into the opportunities to do just that.

With respect to not having more than six legislative secretaries, not aware of that at this point in time. If the Leader of the Opposition has some information with respect to that, we would have a look at it. We would provide it to the Minister of Justice, and we'll ask him to have a look at this as well. I have not been advised that that is actually the case, and until I am by the Minister of Justice, I'm comfortable with the 12 legislative secretaries that we have because, quite frankly, of the work that they are doing, as I have outlined before.

And I would put forward that, in past, this is not uncommon. Actually in 2007, Mr. Chair, under the previous administration, there was all but one. All but one of the members of government of that day were being provided with some type of extra compensation for whether it be a legislative secretary or some other service that they were providing or appointed to within the government. So this is not out of the ordinary to ask members of caucus to engage on ministers' behalf, but to engage most importantly on behalf of the people that we represent in this province.

Mr. Meili: — At a time in our province where we've got a government that's asking Saskatchewan people to tighten their belts, to give up things that matter to them, we have members on that side who are enjoying perks that could seem nothing less than excessive, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And one of those that has really come to our attention of late is travel costs.

Now we know that this Premier, since he took office, has been travelling a great deal more and at a great deal higher expense than his predecessor. In fact, in the first six months of 2018-19, he actually spent more on travel, his own travel, than his predecessor did in any year of his term as premier. In fact, in the

last year he spent as much in travel as Premier Wall did in the last three fiscal years combined.

Now this is a government that's told the people of the province that, you know, we can't afford a service to get them around the province. And we need to strand seniors at home, can't be able to get them to appointments, can't afford that basic infrastructure of a bus service. But suddenly we can afford a huge increase in spending. So why, Mr. Premier, has the travel budget exploded under your watch?

[15:30]

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Our province is an exporting province. We export product to just over 140 nations around the world each and every year. We export to these countries proudly the Saskatchewan product that we have. In fact we're increasing the amount by value of the exports that we are providing to the world as well. In 2007 we were just under \$20 billion in exports, 19.8 billion actually. This past year we're up about 57 per cent in the value of exports that we provide the world — the food, fuel, fertilizer, manufactured goods — up to about \$31 billion provided.

Part of the reason for this is that over the course of the last decade or so we have been, under the previous premier and myself, we have been all around the world. Ministers as well, previous ministers, current ministers have been all around the world telling Saskatchewan's story, telling Saskatchewan's story about the food, the fuel, the fertilizer, the products that we have, how high quality those products are, how competitively priced those products are, and how sustainably produced those products are. And I make no apologies for that; I won't make those apologies today.

And we're going to continue to travel to those markets, supporting our industries, our businesses that are employing people in communities right across Saskatchewan. We are going to most certainly continue that investment so that we can continue to climb that \$31 billion number — our export value up to 35, to 40, to 45, so that we can create that economy that will attract people here and allow for the investment into the services that people expect from their government. So we're going to do that.

But at the same time that we're doing this, we're going to make every effort to keep those travel costs to a minimum. You know, I could go on and quote numbers from years gone by, but we, in comparison . . . but I don't feel the need to do that, Mr. Chair, because I think we should have travelled then as well to promote our goods. I see governments in other provinces across this nation that most certainly are travelling to other areas of the world to sell their wares, if you will, on behalf of the people that they represent. And I don't disparage that in any way and I encourage them to do that because at the end of the day they are labelled as Canadian goods and we are part of that product.

So we will continue to disclose all of the travel costs, as we have. I would point out that our travel costs are down some 58 per cent since we have taken office. And I do want to read in a few notes here, Mr. Chair, with respect to one of the trips, one of the missions that we were on in support of our industries here in the province. And it was a mission that we were on to India. We did

\$1.1 billion worth of trade in India last year, and it's important that myself, on behalf of the people of this province, maintain a relationship and conduct missions to India regularly. This was mentioned to us often over there.

India is a key buyer of our agricultural products. We are India's largest supplier of peas and lentils. India is also a key purchaser of Saskatchewan potash. It's a potential growth market actually for Canadian potash due to the country's growing food needs. It's important for us to be in that market.

India is working very feverishly to expand their nuclear energy program. We have uranium in this province, Mr. Chair. We are very, very well positioned to meet the country's current and future demand for uranium. We can do that with products that are mined, not just in this province, but I would add in northern areas of the province, employing people from across Saskatchewan, but also employing people from northern Saskatchewan.

So when we were in Delhi to begin, we visited a number of Indian farmers there with Canpotex and with Mosaic, and with their market development group to expand and promote Saskatchewan potash, and expand and promote what it can do for Indian agriculture. And we spent the day in a number of rural villages that particular day and we cultivated relationships with Indian potash companies to expand the opportunities to trade.

We participated in the Indo-Canadian Business Chamber, the annual national convention which included a breakfast round table which built on the relationship that we had when we had engaged with the Canada-India Business Council in Toronto earlier. But we met with a number of heads and were the keynote address for just over 200 attendees that participated in a forum with India's secretary of the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion. And it was regarding and focused on food security, of which Saskatchewan has so very much to add to that conversation.

We promoted Saskatchewan agricultural strengths as we advocated for improved market access for our pulse crops with relevant government officials within the Government of India. We highlighted Saskatchewan's leadership in research, in particular in the area of plant protein innovation. And we highlighted the opportunities, the shared opportunities for further collaboration between our research in agri-food products and that in India.

We met with a number of pulse importers, potential investors in Saskatchewan's agri-value food sector. And we witnessed the signing of an MOU, a memorandum of understanding, between Saskatchewan Polytechnic and the University of Regina together with Emmanuel Hospital Association. We had lunch with a number of students that are actually here in the province. They were here on budget day, Mr. Chair, students that are on an internship from India that are attending here in Moose Jaw, I believe.

As I said, Mr. Chair, we went on to Mumbai for the latter half of the trip. Again we met with additional importers; we met with additional potential investors; we engaged with the Canada-India Business Council in Mumbai as well. We had briefings, joint briefings with a number of Indian officials put on by KPMG and we were the keynote address to an audience of just over 300

people in Mumbai that highlighted Saskatchewan's trade and investment with India. And it profiled Saskatchewan as a leader in innovation when it comes to agriculture, when it comes to nuclear technology and nuclear power, and when it comes to agri-food opportunities. Mr. Chair, I can go on with the engagement specifics that we had in India, but this information actually is all available as it is attached to the internet submissions, the costings, the investment dollars that we put on the internet, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Meili: — So we have a situation where the travel budget has exploded under this Premier, where he spent as much in the last year as his predecessor did in the three years previous. More in the first six months than his predecessor, who had far more success we would say with his trade missions, than this Premier has had. More than in any other year, he spent it in six months. And he came across and said that they're trying to keep their costs, their travel costs to a minimum.

Let's look at keeping travel costs to a minimum. The Premier spent \$9,000 to fly to Rapid City, South Dakota for the 2018 Western Governors' Association meeting. The year before, Premier Wall went to the same meeting, actually went a further distance than Rapid City, a nine-and-a-half-hour drive away. That cost \$1,000 for road travel. The Premier decided to fly at \$9,000 — nine times as much.

He went to Moosomin with a crew of seven people and hired a plane. Moosomin is, as the member from Moosomin would well know, not that far away. It's closer than Saskatoon, less than two and a half hours by car. If we still had STC he could have chartered a bus for a lot less than \$7,000. Heck, I bet he still could. But no, he decided he needed to get on a plane.

There was another trip for \$7,000 where he went to Ontario. He went to see Doug Ford for a one-day photo op, a one-day photo op and publicity stunt. That cost \$7,000.

But of course he's not the only one who's hitting the road. Of course he's not the only one who's travelling. We've also got the deputy premier and the member from Meadow Lake who decided to take a trip to Israel, and it cost \$56,000 — \$56,000 made up of first-class flights, 3,300 bucks a piece; luxury hotels, 400 bucks a night; and expensive hosting of meals, hosting of meetings at the same time as they and each of the staff that were travelling also claimed their per diems.

So my questions, as I look down this list, as I look down the list to examples like the Minister for Energy and Resources travelling to Toronto for a two-day trip that cost \$21,300, in each of these, in each of these trips with high numbers of staff along, three, four, five staff accompanying a minister, accompanying the Minister of Social Services or Highways, taking two, three, four staff members for a one-day meeting. Those costs add up and they add up quickly.

At the same time as this government has cut the rental housing supplement, increasing the number of people that are homeless, we've got government members staying in luxury hotels. At the same time as they cut special diets for people on social assistance, we've got government members eating in fancy restaurants. This is on our dime in hosting big, fancy events. Now this, to me, is completely opposite of what the Premier is saying. He's saying

that they're keeping travel costs to a minimum.

So the questions are these: when we're looking at these trips, some of which are of high cost but questionable value, why are we seeing an increase in the number of people? Why is there a big entourage supporting all of these ministers? Why are we seeing first-class travel and stay in luxury hotels? And why do we see people double dipping, accepting their per diems at the same time as the government is providing meals through the events that they're hosting?

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Chair, I think with respect to the premise of the question, we need to keep things in at least some degree of context with respect to accusations around double-dipping. I just don't believe that to be the case. I just simply do not believe that to be the case.

With respect to government travel, whether it be going out to Moosomin to go attend a rally, you know, on behalf and really shoulder to shoulder with the hard-working people of this province, when we have a Premier from another province that has flown to this province to attend that rally because of the importance of our energy industry here in this province to jobs in the province of New Brunswick, Mr. Chair, we made every effort to ensure that we were as efficiently moving not only myself and our support staff around, but moving the Premier from another province around.

In the same way, in fairness, to meet tight timelines on a Saturday — that was a Saturday — to meet tight timelines, we will from time to time use aircraft to move around this province. I can think of an incident when actually the Leader of the Opposition and myself were in the community of Humboldt to attend an important event there and shared an aircraft back to the city of Regina so that we were able to attend the election evening, actually, here in the city of Regina.

Mr. Chair, I make no apologies for any of that movement around the province. As I said, we do so in the most prudent ways that we can. And I would say that we do so as a total investment cost to the people of this province of 58 per cent less than under the NDP some 11 years ago. Still today we are 58 per cent less than the NDP were when they had the opportunity.

[15:45]

Again, I'm not disparaging the cost by the previous administration because I believe the cost of travel is an investment when it is used wisely to engage with our trading partners, when it is used widely to engage with our like-provinces across this nation, understanding that the industries that operate in Saskatchewan aren't exclusive to Saskatchewan. They operate in other areas of Canada. They operate in other areas of North America and they operate in other areas of the world.

Toronto, Mr. Chair, was brought up, and I just want to go through actually the trip, the mission we had went on to Toronto some time ago, in light of the fact that I am leaving again tomorrow to go to Toronto to engage with the investment bankers in Toronto. Myself and the Minister of Finance will be there engaging on, not only the direct relationship we have with the investment bankers, but the relationship that the investment bankers have with the broader economy here in the province and expanding the

opportunities that we have in the province.

But the last time I was in Toronto, Mr. Chair, that I believe was being referred to, we were there to participate in a program that was actually organized by the Canada-India Business Council in advance of a mission to India, which I had just talked about, Mr. Chair. It was to engage with the Canada-India Business Council. We were the keynote at their supper that particular evening, and I remind the members of this House again that India is our third-largest export market. Exports have increased in value some 15 per cent between 2013 and 2017, over those five years. And I would put forward, in many ways that is due to the continued engagement and the marked presence that we have had in that market.

The Deputy Premier attended with myself as well to engage with the Canada-India Business Council. We had a CEO breakfast actually that the Deputy Premier and myself attended with. And there was people at that, CEOs at that particular breakfast from Tata Consultancy Services, ICICI Bank, LEA International, Hamblin Watsa, Fairfax India Holdings Corporation, Global Financial Institutions Group, from BMO Capital Markets, from the Taj Group, from the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, from Tata Sons, North America. I think, if I remember correctly, they had flown in from New York for that particular meeting.

In addition we met, as we go to any province we would obviously extend, as a Premier visiting another province, the opportunity to meet with the present Premier in that said province. And we would always offer that, whether it would be in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, wherever we travel, Mr. Chair. And we offered that.

And we had the opportunity, actually on behalf of the Minister of Trade and Export to work with Ontario and to announce our moving forward with harmonizing our regulations around single wide-tire legislation so that companies that are operating in the transportation industry and are choosing to operate with a single wide tire rather than duals can do so with the same set of regulations from the western Saskatchewan border now right out actually to the eastern New Brunswick border, which is exciting for a number of reasons. They use less fuel with these tires; 8 per cent reduction in fuel use ultimately corresponds, I believe, to an 8 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from those transportation companies that are choosing that. So we were happy to move forward with that.

You know, Mr. Chair, there's a number of missions that were referenced, and I just want to put this on the record. There's been a change in this province now, but with respect to the previous premier of Alberta and some of the missions that were taken by Premier Notley of the day, some I was at the very same events. Some are similar, at a different time slightly.

But the fact of the matter is, is I just want to preface this with this: I respect the fact that Premier Notley was leading those missions on behalf of a very similar economy in Alberta, relative to the economy in Saskatchewan. She was leading those missions on behalf of expanding Alberta's market opportunities and ultimately, I would say, working together in some cases, both of us expanding Canada's opportunities for expanding our markets for our energy products, for our agri-food products, for our manufactured goods that are often integrated across provincial

boundaries, for our mined goods that are in Western Canada as well.

We were at the North American summit that was in Scottsdale, Arizona. There was a delegation that attended with myself to support the engagement with governors. We were at \$14,468 was our delegation cost, for all-in cost. Alberta's delegation was also at that event. Their all-in cost was just a little over \$26,000 — 26,283 — so about 45 per cent below at that particular engagement.

I was in China last year, a pricey trip, a large investment on behalf of the industries that we have — the engaging with the uranium industry, the nuclear power industry, the potash industry, the agricultural industry, the manufacturing industry. STEP [Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership] attended in China as well. We were about \$94,000; \$94,274 was the precise amount. The province of Alberta and the premier was in China at a similar time as well. Their cost about \$135,146, significantly more again. We're about 30 per cent below that.

Southeast Asia, we had our Minister of Trade and Export was in Southeast Asia on a mission there on behalf of the industries important to Saskatchewan, \$32,306. Minister Bilous was also in Southeast Asia from Alberta at a similar point in time, \$44,502.

So again I just want to reiterate in no way would I disparage those investments made by Alberta. I don't know who was attending with the minister or the premier at that point in time. But I would commend them for choosing to ensure they make that investment so that they can not only advance Alberta's access into those markets, but by association really are advancing Canada's access into those markets. And we are part of Canada, a proud part of our nation. And we should never forget that one in five jobs in this province are directly dependent on those export industries that we have.

We have increased that export value to \$31 billion, and we'll continue to support those industries in communities across this province because it is allowing people to make the choice to move here. It's allowing our next generation to make a choice to stay here because there are careers available for them. And we'll do everything that we can to defend that opportunity into the future.

Mr. Meili: — Now when you think about what people have been asked to do here in the province, the way they've been asked to tighten their belts, the way they've been asked to go without, it sends a very strong, wrong message to those people of our communities to see this government expanding, not just the scope, but also the expense and the choices of travel that they're making. And there's a lot of work for this government to do to actually keep those costs under control. Right now we see these trips taking on more and more character of luxury, and that's the wrong message to send.

Now there's another message that I think people are looking for as well, which is they're looking for a province that's willing to make sure that we're getting our fair share across the country. We read a letter from the Finance minister a few days ago that I admired. I thought it was a good letter. It went to Bill Morneau, the federal Finance minister, back in January — January of 2018, it's worth pointing out. And that letter asked for a re-evaluation

of the equalization formula to take into better account the way that hydro and other renewable resources are used in the calculation and the way that non-renewable resources are used in the calculation and done so in a way that leaves Saskatchewan losing significant amounts of money and has for many years. It's something that we've been concerned about for quite some time.

The interesting part of this correspondence, then, starts with the return message from the Finance minister. And we got a disappointing response, not what I would have hoped. He said that he wasn't going to change that formula, that it was going to go ahead as it was. And that's what happened. On February 27, 2018 they introduced the bill that locked in the equalization formula until 2024, and that passed third reading on June 6th, 2018. All of that is just a matter of history.

And now particularly alarming, what is strange, what is really strange, is that on June 20th of that year, just a couple weeks after that legislation became law, a few months after the Minister of Finance had been informed that that was going to be the case, we saw the Premier get up and make a lot of noise about equalization. He went out and he said that he was going to try to negotiate a new deal. And then he discovered — and he discovered when questioned — that that had already happened, that it was too late, that that was locked in for another five years.

So the question is, what happened? Had he and his staff simply forgotten that that was the case? Or were they pretending that that wasn't the case in order to try and create a political story? Because otherwise I can't see what makes sense. The communication happened between the two Finance ministers. The decision was clear. And yet you've got the Premier getting up and, instead of advocating as he should for a re-evaluation of the formula to make it more fair, he brought out this goofy, back-of-the-napkin, 50/50 idea, an idea that wouldn't make equalization more fair. It wouldn't make equalization more fair. It would just make it less equalizing. It would make it less equalizing. You would have a situation where you would have provinces experiencing an economic boom still getting equalization dollars. It doesn't make any sense.

What would make sense is what the Finance minister said off the beginning: let's get a better deal that excludes non-renewable resources, that takes full account of hydroelectricity and gets us a fair deal.

So my question is, will the Premier let us know what happened? Why was he so out to lunch on the 20th of June when it came to describing what was going on with equalization in the country? And secondly, will he actually take the steps to get to work and take this federal government to court, get us a better deal on equalization for Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Chair, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. I want to just back up, provide some clarity to two previous questions that we had.

First of all, actually at the outset of that question, he talked about the expansion of the investment in travel that we have here. Expansion would not be the appropriate word. This is one word where they could actually, the members opposite, could use a word appropriately and that would be "cut." We have cut the investment in travel by some 58 per cent since the NDP formed

government. That is a fact and that is the case.

The other was with respect to the number of legislative secretaries. There is a legislative secretaries Act, Mr. Chair. It was brought in in 1978, and it did limit the number of legislative secretaries to six. So that Act would actually limit the number of legislative secretaries to six if it was not repealed in 2005 by the NDP government.

So again, Mr. Chair, I would just put forward that we make every attempt to provide all the clarity, with accurate answers, to the best of our ability in this House, whether it be in question period, in committee here today, Mr. Chair. And I would ask for the very same effort to be made by all members of this House with respect to the letter the Minister of Finance had provided to the federal Minister of Finance with respect to looking at some changes with the equalization formula here in the nation of Canada.

There are a number of Finance ministers across this nation that have some challenges with the current equalization formula. There are a number of Finance ministers that have engaged with the federal Finance minister, requesting the opportunity to have a look at the formula, to open up the formula, and maybe change the formula so it is more responsive to all areas of the nation in providing and equalizing, really, the services that we provide as a nation and provide in our respective provinces.

And that is why our Minister of Finance had corresponded with the federal minister. I believe that the previous minister of Finance had had similar correspondence both verbally and possibly even in writing with the federal minister, as Saskatchewan has entered a downturn in our economy over the course of the last few years.

[16:00]

And it's been challenging to continue to contribute to this through the existing formula. Mr. Chair, it's been challenging as we've had to make some very difficult decisions, budgetary decisions in this province. We have made those decisions to ensure that we were able to come back into balance this past year. We're very proud of that, Mr. Chair.

We're also very proud of the fact that we are a contributing member to the nation through our equalization formula. Although we would like to see some changes within that formula, we are very proud of the fact that we continue to have strength in our economy, strength in our people and allowing us to continue to contribute to that formula.

We did put forward a formula after we did not hear any clarity from the federal minister with respect to what they were going to do with the equalization formula. In fact they had hidden that in I think a 500-page-plus omnibus budget bill that was introduced and passed in the federal House of Commons, Mr. Chair. That's where the equalization formula was renewed in its current form. It provided provinces such as Quebec, I believe, just going off memory, I think about \$1.6 billion in additional funding through that equalization formula, Mr. Chair. And we continue to receive zero.

What we had put forward after much discussion, Mr. Chair — not a back-of-the-napkin formula by any stretch, but after much

discussion — was if we want to have a real conversation around the equalization formula in this nation, the first question that I would come back with, if someone had asked me, if I was the federal Finance minister, is what say you, mister such-and-such? And so we wanted to put forward a reasonable suggestion, if you will, to open up the conversation across the nation that we believe that Canada can do better by sharing our wealth between our respective provinces and territories. And we believe that to this day.

And so we had put forward a very simple formula that says, you know, let's take half of the fund, half of the equalization fund, and let's just leave that to be distributed in the way that it currently is, and let's take the other half of that fund and let's distribute that on a per capita basis. Let's put this forward. Let's have a discussion about, you know, whether this is right.

We believe it would be an opportunity for a province like Saskatchewan, maybe a province like Alberta, who have been . . . Alberta, an eternal contributor. Saskatchewan, we hope, an eternal contributor, Mr. Chair, but most certainly have been in excess of the last decade. It provides us an opportunity to actually continue to contribute to leveling our services across the nation, which is the goal of that particular program, but still be able to — in years of hardship, quite frankly, that we have had over the course of the last couple of years with respect to a decrease in natural resource prices, some of our products, and some other headwinds that we have been facing — provide us with the opportunity to actually have some degree of collection from that program to equalize some of the services that we provide here in this province.

Mr. Meili: — Now when we see a government that has tripled what they're spending on travel and manages to call that a cut, that's impressive. That's impressive. When we see a government that cuts education, cuts health care, and calls them increases, it's impressive. It's some Newspeak that is really out of this world.

Now when we talk about issues that are out of this world, there is one that is the most pressing that we're facing as a planet today, and that is the issue of climate change. Now we've got a government across the way that has given lip service to climate change over the years with promises since 2009 to decrease the emissions by 2020 by 20 per cent. And instead we've seen an increase between 2007, where it was 72 megatonnes, to now 78 in the most recent year. Now we have failed to see any significant efforts to reduce emissions, no efforts that can amount to anything when it comes to actual measurable differences.

So the question is, and I think it's an important question as we've seen this government move from a Premier who had to be forced to admit that climate change was real. We've now seen him move to having been forced to admit it's real to now saying, oh well we don't emit enough so it doesn't really matter, that we don't emit a great deal so we don't have to worry too much about our emissions. He's moved from climate denialism to climate nihilism.

What can we see from this Premier in terms of commitment? What is his commitment to reduce emissions by 2030? How much will they go down?

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Chair, again I appreciate the question.

I'm just going to address a quick little bit with respect to the preamble to ensure that we have the facts on the record here with respect to the Leader of the Opposition's comments around tripling travel. I mentioned travel is actually down 58 per cent since the members opposite were in government. Cuts to education or health, nothing could be further from the fact. This particular budget introduced this year, as has been said many times on the floor of this Assembly, has the largest investment in education in the history of the province. The same goes for health, Mr. Chair. That needs to be acknowledged.

With an important conversation, not just in this province, not just in this nation but around the world, and that is a conversation around a global challenge that we are facing as humanity — the challenge of climate change. And how are we going to deal with this challenge? How are we going to actually reduce our emissions, not just in Saskatchewan but around the world? And how are we going to enhance our opportunity to continue to sequester carbon, to pull carbon out of the atmosphere, whether it be through plants or through chemical reactions or however that may be, to ensure that we are doing right by that next generation?

The previous premier was never, again just to correct the record, was never forced to make comments around climate change or his beliefs with respect to how and why and what was causing climate change. In fact, the previous premier was premier of this province when we saw the largest investment in carbon mitigation technology in the nation. It was made by the people of the province. It was made under the leadership of Premier Brad Wall when he was premier of the province of Saskatchewan.

It was a government that I was very proud to be a part of, proud to be a part of that investment as were the people across this province, Mr. Chair, an important investment. An important investment not only for the carbon mitigation that is occurring with that investment, but how it is stepping forward with investment now in carbon capture and storage in other areas of the world.

And I think most recently of the project that is up and operational at Petra Nova just outside of Houston, about four times the size, sequestering carbon that is captured off a coal-fired power plant in that jurisdiction.

And I would again put forward, this technology will be important as we move forward with the some 1,600 coal-fired plants that are being looked at, planned, under construction around the world. And as we talked earlier, I was in Beijing, China not that long ago. I was in Delhi, India. And we have some air pollution issues immediate to those areas. And you know, this is an area where we may differ across the floor with respect to how do we deal with this challenge as we move forward.

We believe in innovation, in science. We believe in taking the best and brightest and the knowledge that we have and sharing that with the rest of the world so that we can make and address what is a global challenge as opposed to across the way where they believe that taxing the citizens and families of this province with a carbon tax will actually, in some way, miraculously reduce emissions and change the outcomes of what is a global, a very global challenge.

So there is going to be some differentiation on this topic and it's important for us to remember this: since 2005 our carbon intensity in this province is down some 8.8 per cent. During that same time period, our GDP [gross domestic product] has grown some 22 per cent in Saskatchewan. We are producing more product with a far lower carbon footprint. We are taking pounds and tonnes of carbon out of the products that we are producing here in this province, unlike years previous to that.

From the years 1991 to 2007, emissions in this province were actually up some 70 per cent. Now that's a fact that may or may not be accepted by the members opposite in this House, but maybe they would accept a quote or the opinion of their Environment critic, who had this to say on May the 6th of 2009, and he's referring to the NDP at this point in time, and I quote:

We came out of government for the past 16 years and we hadn't reduced carbon emissions or reduced poverty, and we were the socialist party. That's supposed to be our priority, and instead, emissions and poverty have both increased.

Now, Mr. Chair, that is a fact. Under the members opposite, emissions were up some 70 per cent from 1991 to 2007.

Mr. Chair, it's important to remember the intensity of how products are actually produced in this world, and this is where this conversation has taken the wrong fork in the road from time to time. Let's use the product of steel. We have among the world's most efficient, from a carbon perspective, most efficient steel manufacturers not too far from where we're standing, right here in the city of Regina. Evraz steel, Mr. Chair, I would put forward, is one of the — if not the, but right up there — is one of the most efficient steel manufacturers in the world.

On average a pound . . . And this is information put out by the United Steelworkers association. In the nation of Canada, on average steel that is produced in Canada, per tonne of steel, is about 90 pounds of carbon that goes into producing a tonne of steel in Canada. When you move to China, that number moves per tonne of steel to about 1,600 pounds of carbon, and when you move to India it peaks out over 2,000 pounds of carbon being emitted per tonne of steel. These are important numbers.

And this gets me back to the innovation and the opportunity that we have to share this innovation with others around the world because right now we are exporting coal from North America to places like India and China so that they can make steel with some of the poorest, the lowest environmental thresholds that we have.

[16:15]

So what is a truly global challenge needs to be addressed in a global conversation, a conversation of which we bring to each and every mission that we attend — a conversation that we brought to Beijing, a conversation that we brought to Delhi and Mumbai, a conversation that we bring to our federal government each and every time we have the opportunity to engage with them.

Again we've put forward in this province a plan of Prairie Resilience that will reduce our carbon emissions by some 12 million tonnes in the out years. Mr. Chair, we have a record in agriculture, being some of the most if not the, I would say, the

most efficient from a carbon perspective, agricultural industry and agri-food industry in the world, utilizing zero-till and pulse technology.

We have a 40 per cent reduction target in our electrical generation here in this province, a 40 per cent emissions reduction target. That's 10 per cent further than the Paris accord commitment that was put forward by the federal government. In addition to that we have a 40 to 45 per cent methane reduction target in our energy industry, Mr. Chair.

These are all actions that we have taken on behalf of the industries and people that we represent. And we've taken them, not just in light of the people that we represent today but to ensure that we are leaving a stronger economy and a better and more sustainable environment for that next generation.

Mr. Meili: — Now, Mr. Premier, I was going to say that was a very long answer, but answer would be the wrong word because the question was very simple. What are your targets for 2030 for reduction? If I could just have the answer to that, simply, please.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Chair, with respect to a target of the province of Saskatchewan, I would say this: Canada's target is Saskatchewan's target. Canada has put forward a 30 per cent reduction of emissions when they signed on to the Paris accord. We had moved forward in signing the Vancouver Declaration, as all provinces and territories did, to do what we could in our respective provincial jurisdiction to add to Canada's opportunity to achieve their 30 per cent reduction target, understanding that provinces across this nation are very diverse in their economies, very diverse in where the emissions of their respective jurisdiction actually come from, and the impact of changing those emissions, what that impact would ultimately mean to the economy.

So we have been working very diligently, as I say, putting forward our methane action reduction plan, which is an important plan that we've worked very closely with the industries with. We'll have in excess of 6 million tonnes that will be reduced annually each and every year here in the province. We have our 40 per cent reduction in electrical generation emissions, Mr. Chair, which will add an additional at least 6 million tonnes-plus each and every year, Mr. Chair.

We have our plan of Prairie Resilience that we have put forward and moved very closely, in lockstep I would say really with our heavy emitters here across the province, a plan that recognizes that we need to continue to reduce our emissions and will in the out years to 12 million tonnes, but also recognizes the good work that is already happening in our manufacturing industry, the good work that I had alluded to with respect to the steel industry, the good work that is happening with the investment.

We've had \$20 billion investment in our potash industry. Some of that investment was, yes, to expand production. Some of that investment was actually to increase our environmental outcomes, increase our sustainability of the mines that are operating here in this province. And we are a world leader when it comes to sustainable potash production, operating among the 70th percentile when it comes to environmental outcomes.

With respect to a specific target here in this province we have

repeatedly conversed with the federal government over what would be an appropriate tonnage amount on what we could reduce or look to sequester through the aforementioned initiatives or through signing internationally traded mitigation outcomes with other nations around the world under article 6 in the Paris accord, which is of great interest to our province in exporting zero-till drills, in exporting innovation around Boundary dam 3, in exporting all sorts of opportunities that we have invested in. In pulse crops, for example, that are now being grown in other areas of the world.

There are tremendous opportunities for us under article 6 to expand our . . . really share our knowledge commercially around the world. But the federal government has repeatedly come back, not so much with an actual emissions target, but a target price on those emissions of which we just totally disagree with for so many reasons on so many levels, Mr. Chair: (a) the impact it would have to the Saskatchewan economy; (b) it actually doesn't work in reducing emissions, which is what this conversation is to be about. Most certainly it has no impact on any of the emissions outside of our borders of Saskatchewan or even Canada for that fact. We need to share that innovation that I had talked about in order for that to occur.

So this is where there is a hang up in the conversation between the federal government and the government of Saskatchewan. We continually are putting forward opportunities to actually reduce our emission, to reduce our emissions not only in this province, but use that innovation to reduce emissions in other areas of the world. To enhance our sequestration, not only again within the borders and confines of the province of Saskatchewan, but to export that technology, that innovation around the world, and have that innovation go to work around the world in sequestering more carbon than we can just here within the province.

And we continually come back with the answer from our federal government is no, you need to have a carbon tax on the hard-working families of the province of Saskatchewan. And I think this is a point of differentiation between the current government of the province of Saskatchewan and the Leader of the Opposition and opposition members as they repeatedly have made comments with respect to supporting a carbon tax on Saskatchewan people and ultimately, I'd put forward, would very quickly given the opportunity, do exactly what they did — NDP has done in every other jurisdiction where they have had the opportunity — is actually tax the residents to the highest degree that they can possibly stand.

Mr. Meili: — Now when you talk about the price on carbon that has been imposed, one of the things . . . And this is something we agree on, but we don't think that was the right way. We don't like the federal backstop that came from this Liberal government.

But one of the complaints that I heard from this Premier when it first came out was the fact that GST [goods and services tax] would be charged on top of that and that really you had a situation where you had one level of government taxing another level of government. And that to me was pretty ironic because you've got a government here that put the PST on construction and is charging that on municipal projects.

We saw a lot of fanfare this spring at SUMA [Saskatchewan

Urban Municipalities Association] when . . . late winter at SUMA when this government said, oh we're increasing our revenue-sharing formula. Well when you actually look at the numbers, that doesn't make a lot of difference to a community like say Moose Jaw for example, where they saw, with that small increase, a bump of 200,000 increase in their revenue. But in that same period, they were going to be spending 800,000 more, four times as much, because of the PST being applied to the projects they need to undertake.

This is a government that, time after time, has been downloading costs onto municipal governments, forcing them to increase property taxes or decrease services. This has been the method of this government since 2017. And one of the things that makes zero sense to me is why this government thinks they should be charging another level of government a tax. So will the Premier explain this, or will he do the right thing and stop charging the PST? Or, hey, stop charging it on construction altogether? But at the very least, stop charging it to municipalities?

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Chair, with respect to municipal revenue sharing . . . Maybe I'll get to municipal revenue sharing just in a moment. I'd like to address the PST on construction first of all.

The PST on construction was always actually present on construction supplies. It's been added to the entire construction bill as of a couple of years ago, and we understand fully that there is an impact to this change, to our construction industry here in the province. We are aware of that. We understand that there is an impact there.

There's also other impacts that are affecting that industry that we're also aware of, as is the industry, in fairness, is aware of as well. They culminate with the . . . are added to by the federal government's changes to the stress test, for instance, have been changed slightly in the most recent budget but continue to add pressure to the industry. We have entered a downturn in this industry, if you will, with a fairly high inventory in our major centres across the province that have added to that the low, if you will, or the pressure on constructions.

As well as I had mentioned earlier, our economy has been lower, has been weaker the last couple of years, Mr. Chair, and we're looking forward to continuing to work with our industries to do everything that we can to enhance the opportunity for that economy to strengthen so that families again in this province have the opportunity to climb in their career journey, that we have the opportunity to attract people to move here. And as I always say, most importantly, all of us whether you're a first generation Canadian or a person in Saskatchewan that our children have the opportunity to participate in the economy fully.

With respect to municipal revenue sharing with our municipalities, since 2007 we're actually up not quite 100 per cent, 98 per cent we're up with our funding to municipal revenue sharing. That's in stark contrast to the administration prior that had cut about \$500 million out of the municipal revenue sharing during their full term of office.

We have provided \$1.7 billion more to municipalities since this time. Our total investments of over \$2.8 billion is compared to the last, that's over the last 11 years, you compare that to the previous 11 years of \$818 million, 2.8 to 818. So this is a

government that continues to invest in our municipalities through municipal revenue sharing, also through investments in infrastructure in our municipalities to accommodate the services that we know our municipalities are requested to offer to the residents that we share our representation of. So the investment in our municipalities has most certainly been there the last number of years and continues to be there today.

Specific to the community of Moose Jaw, municipal revenue sharing in the community of Moose Jaw in 2018-19 was just under \$6 million — \$5,967,312. That's representative of a 111 per cent increase since 2007-08, since the NDP had the opportunity to provide municipal revenue sharing. This means that our government is cumulatively providing \$65,500,000 since 2007-08 to that community and there's a list of infrastructure projects that are added to that, Mr. Chair, that we have worked closely with the community of Moose Jaw with.

And I think in fairness, we could tell a story just like that in community after community across this province through the municipal revenue sharing program that we have, that increased \$10 million this past year to \$251 million from the year previous. It's a program in fairness, and the municipal sector will say this, that is sought after and envied. It is really the envy of the nation for municipalities that are not located in the province of Saskatchewan. I haven't heard of any municipalities just outside the borders in Manitoba or Alberta that want to actually annex into the province as of yet, but we'll keep our ears open for just such a discussion.

With respect to GST being charged on the carbon tax, on our carbon tax that we now have here courtesy of the federal government, Mr. Chair, we think that's wrong. We think there should not be GST charged on the carbon tax. In fact, we don't think there should be a carbon tax charged on the hard-working families as it simply is ineffective. It doesn't work. And it shouldn't be present here in the province of Saskatchewan.

[16:30]

Mr. Meili: — Of course the Premier failed to explain why he thinks it's appropriate to tax another level of government, something that mayors and councils across the province have raised to me as a major problem, a major barrier for them to invest in water treatment plants, to invest in upgrades of their local infrastructure. It's a major barrier for them to do the work for their citizens that they should be doing.

When it comes to the economy I was, however . . . I found it refreshing that unlike the spin that we usually hear in this place, the Premier actually recognized the economy has been struggling and continues to struggle to this day. And that's why it's so baffling that we saw this Premier and his government choose to, in a time of economic downturn, actually make things worse — cut health care, cut education, and slap the PST on construction labour.

And what are the results of that? According to the Saskatchewan Construction Association, 14,000 fewer jobs in this province, directly connected to a slowdown in construction. We see far fewer building permits, a decrease of 61 per cent in building permits since the PST was introduced in '17 to today. Why does this government persist in doing something that is worsening an

already struggling economy?

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well thank you, thank you, Mr. Chair. Again I just want to reference the fact that this year's budget is the largest investment in education, largest investment in health care in the history of the province of Saskatchewan. An investment that us, all of us on this side, are very proud to make. It's a core service that the people of this province expect. There is more work to do in both of those, in both of those sectors, both of those important, very important sectors. And we're very proud of the record investment in both of those sectors.

With respect to the economy and the last couple of years of the economy and my reference to the fact that our economy has slowed the last couple of years, it's important to keep again that in context as well.

Since 2007 in this province, the GDP has grown. In 2007 it was \$65.9 billion. In this past year we, the most recent year that we have records, it's \$82.5 billion here in the province. That's an increase of about 25 per cent in just over 10 years. Important to acknowledge the context of a slowing economy in the broader expansion of the economy that we have enjoyed.

The 165,000 people that now live here as families in our communities — how that has occurred, Mr. Chair, in fairness, is by the job creation in our communities. Some 77,000 jobs have been created since 2007 in our communities. People have moved here from, I believe, 190 countries actually, all around the world, to make a community in Saskatchewan their home. We're very proud of that immigration record.

We're very proud of the opportunity as we move forward to expand on just that type of an initiative. Just this past year, again in the context of me saying that the economy has slowed over the course of the past few years, just this past year from March 2018 we are actually up 9,800 jobs here in Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Chair, this is important for us to keep the words of a slowing economy in context. And this again I think will just bring us back to the context of where decisions get you after a period of time in government.

I just read off some of the statistics over the course of the last decade of some 76 or 77,000 jobs; 9,800 job number increase over the course of the past year; a 25 per cent increase in the GDP versus what was on the people of this province's mind in 2007. And I have with me a Sigma Analytics poll that was put out in 2007. And the number one answer to this question — what is the most important issue facing the province of Saskatchewan today? — in 2007 was this: youth leaving, population decline.

Mr. Chair, that no longer registers on the polls that are conducted here in this province. Youth leaving, population decline, is firmly in Saskatchewan's past. It's part of the history books. And we will continue to make all of the decisions that we can to ensure that we don't have that rising up on the minds of Saskatchewan people.

And here's some statistics as to why that was on their mind, and it has to do with the government of the day. The NDP government of the day would put out growth plans each and every year. I thought we had done the first growth plan in about 2012, but I was incorrect with that. They had put out growth plans

each and every year, and in 2000 their growth plan indicated that they had lost 7,672 people. So in 2001 they gave it another run, Mr. Chair. They lost 2,816 people. 2002 they vow to do better but, Mr. Chair, another loss of 2,489 people. 2005 under a great effort, they managed to get that number all the way up to losing 3,752 people.

Mr. Chair, I would say this: thank goodness. Thank goodness that the NDP stopped releasing their growth plans and gave us an opportunity to actually believe ourselves in this province and to have the opportunity to grow this province, because under the NDP growth plans, the only thing that was growing was their stack of growth plans. That's it, Mr. Chair. So thankfully in 2007 the people of this province made a decision to go a new direction, Mr. Chair, and we'll continue to serve and to listen and to work collaboratively with the people of this province to do right by them and to do right by all of the people we represent.

Mr. Meili: — The other day we heard the Minister of the Environment encourage people in this House to live in the now, which is a piece of advice I think would be very helpful for the Premier. He likes to spend his time in the 1990s but there's things going on right now that matter.

And in fact the level of concern out in the public around jobs is very serious. The increase in out-migration is growing and we have an economy that is slowing down. People are coming but they're not sticking around. And when we look at the economy, why is it slowing down?

It's slowing down. When we look at the Royal Bank, their predictions have us at the third-lowest growth in the country for the coming year. TD Bank says the same. We look back in the last year, 2018, among the lowest growth in the country again, the second-lowest outside the Maritimes. We've got a slow economy. We've got a slow economy and this government doesn't want to talk about that. They want to talk about things that happened 20 years ago instead of addressing the fact that it's actually their own choices.

And what is one of the reasons that those big banks see our economy struggling? Well it's because there's a lack of capital investment, a lack of construction activity. And we see that, including in this budget. We see a big dip in the capital investment.

But let's go back a few years. Let's go back a few years to when this government actually was spending some money, when this government was spending a few dollars. And let's look at what happened back in 2013, 2014 . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well it's this government's own record. They don't want to talk about their own record. They want to go back a decade ago but not two, three years ago. Pretty standard.

Now when we look at the major projects, and there's been some big projects here: \$4.4 billion worth of expenditure in public spending. But the big thing about that \$4 billion spent on the three biggest projects is that 74 per cent of the top 4 billion went to out-of-province and out-of-country companies. When we look at the top three, 100 per cent of those top three companies, top three projects, were run by out-of-province and out-of-country companies.

The fact of the matter is, when we are building our own roads, our hospitals, our schools with our own tax dollars, we should be employing our own workers. We should be using our own companies. That's not what happens under this government.

So my question is, why? Why is the Sask Party content to hand contract after contract to out-of-province and out-of-country companies? And why won't they take steps to take into account the unique value offered by Saskatchewan companies in building our own infrastructure projects?

[16:45]

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, as I said, the investment in infrastructure, the \$4.4 billion that's being referred to is part of, you know, some significant . . . I would say, at the low end it is significant. But at the high end to say, over the last number of years, record investment in infrastructure in communities right across Saskatchewan, whether that be in our highways infrastructure, Mr. Chair, whether that be in health care, education.

You name the portfolio, the sector, the chances are that the infrastructure investment has been higher than it ever has been in the history of the province of Saskatchewan. Over \$30 billion invested in our Crown and ministry infrastructure here in Saskatchewan, and that has in part been to service the people that live here but in part to service the growth of our communities, the growth of families that are choosing to live and work there. 160,000-plus people, 76,000 new jobs in the province — a statistic that we are very proud of because it's more than just numbers. It's my neighbour and quite likely yours.

Mr. Chair, with respect to some of the projections that are coming on GDP growth, where we are in the now is up 25 per cent from where the NDP were in their now. As we look out, there are a number of different agencies, I believe nine, that have put forward the forecast of GDP growth here in Canada. Five of those nine have Saskatchewan ranked as the top, the third in growth here in the nation. And so we, you know, look at all of the numbers, Mr. Chair, when we look at the projections, and we must also remember, Mr. Chair, and understand that they are just that — they are projections.

With respect to the procurement and the procurement that we embark across here in Saskatchewan, we work very hard to work within our confines of Priority Saskatchewan, our trade agreements that we have across the nation to give Saskatchewan opportunities, every opportunity to participate in the public procurement process that we have.

I think there was some indication that some of the larger projects, Mr. Chair, have been brought together by a consolidation of a number of different contractors. Mr. Chair, I would put forward that in these cases there is significant amounts of local procurement, that is local contractors that are being used in these projects. For example, in the Regina bypass there was 106 of those contractors were from this province. There was in the joint-use schools 73 contractors from this province that took part in the construction of those facilities; in the Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford, 31 contractors from this province; in The Meadows, 54. A total of 255 Saskatchewan-based companies took part in those projects; that equates to about 70

per cent of the contractors that were participating.

In each of these cases I would also put forward that on behalf of the taxpayers, the investors in this infrastructure that we represent, there's a value-for-money audit, a fairness adviser's report. There are project agreements and requests for qualifications and requests for proposals for all these projects that are available on our SaskBuilds website. And we work through Priority Saskatchewan to ensure that the contractors that employ people, again in our communities, are aware.

There is one other project on the Crown side that I would just draw the attention to, and that is the total awards to local companies in the Chinook power station contract, where about \$125 million of that project, 9 million of those dollars were actually procured to companies with Aboriginal ownership. This procurement effort was an effort for certain, and it's an effort that will continue in future investment in capital. Sixteen of seventeen awarded subcontractors maintained local content, and 18 of 25 awarded site services maintained local content as well. Important for us to keep this in context, if you will.

Also important to keep in context, the investment in infrastructure across government relative to where it was not that long ago. And I will continue to live in the now, and I will get there, but I am going to take a step back. And I quote on this investment that was part of a budget document in '06-07, and it's this, and I quote, "This budget makes the largest ever public capital investment — \$407.3 million in capital works — for hospitals, schools, highways and other infrastructure projects." That was the last — thankfully — the last budget of the NDP here in the province over the course of the last decade, \$407 million trumpeted as the largest ever public capital investment.

This past year in this province, Mr. Chair — I bring it back so that we are living in the now — \$2.7 billion invested in public infrastructure across the province.

Mr. Meili: — So I just want to clear something up. First of all, I appreciate the Premier bringing forth the 2005 legislative secretaries Act. I wanted to do my homework and make sure that was entirely the case on our side as well. So I apologize for that error, and we have of course deleted the tweet that referenced it as well. Thank you for bringing that to our attention.

When it comes to this question around the expenditures and the percentage of those expenditures of those major projects that go to Saskatchewan companies, there's a very interesting piece of information that the Premier shared with us in that one. It's the first time I've heard him do this.

He actually told us how many dollars and not just how many contractors when it came to a specific project, the Chinook power station in Swift Current. He said it was \$125 million. Now that is a large amount of money. It is worth noting that it's less than 20 per cent of that project, so still over 80 per cent is leaving the province. That's a big deal.

And I guess what I would ask him to do is, let's have those numbers on a couple of other projects. Let's have those numbers on the Regina bypass — not the number of contractors, not somebody getting a day's work and being put as part of 70 per

cent of the contractors — how many dollars went to Saskatchewan contractors? And hey, let's go down the list. Boundary dam 3, carbon capture — not how many contractors, not what percentage of the contractors — what percentage of the dollars? You could tell us for Chinook. Tell us for the rest.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well thank you, Mr. Chair. With respect, just maybe a couple of comments with respect to the Chinook power station. And then I'll move on to the bypass, the single largest investment in infrastructure in the history of the province, an investment of \$1.88 billion on behalf of the people that live in this province, for safety most assuredly, for the safety of not only those transporting goods but those families that are transporting in and out of our capital city and communities surrounding it. But with respect to the Chinook power plant, there are some products that are involved in the construction of a natural gas power plant. Quite simply those products aren't built here in the province of Saskatchewan; they are built in other areas.

There's some service infrastructure that we need, some cranes for instance. I think one of the cranes that was utilized in the construction of the Chinook plant, there are actually four of those cranes available in the nation of Canada . . . pardon me, in North America, allow me to correct myself. One of those cranes came in for the construction and the movement of some of the large equipment that was being installed there. There just simply wasn't a crane that size available in this province, so there are some of the procurement dollars that are invested in that project because they simply aren't available to be invested in in companies here in this province.

Another example would be the gas-powered turbines or the gas-powered generators aren't actually constructed here in the province of Saskatchewan. There are companies like General Electric that do that type of work, Mr. Chair. They bring them in and they are placed then in, quite likely in place by that crane. They're constructed by Siemens, is that correct, Mr. Chair?

So there are some portions of procurement that just simply aren't available to contractors in this province, in a facility such as that. And I think it's important for us to again keep in context all that's going on here in saying that. In saying that, there's a substantial amount of Saskatchewan contractors, as I mentioned, that were involved in the construction of the Chinook power plant from AGI Envirotank, for example, from Biggar, Saskatchewan. We have Allan Construction, Harris Rebar, Westland Concrete right from Swift Current, which would make sense given the location of the Chinook power plant. We have DFI corporation from Weyburn, Balzer's Canada. We have Wheatland Machine from again Swift Current, Knudsen Excavating from Swift Current. We have companies from Estevan, from Oxbow, from Regina. We have companies from outside the province that actually committed to hiring individuals from within the province.

So you know, Mr. Speaker, I would say this with respect to Chinook. As we move forward there is always room for us to continually work with our contractors, work through, whether it be SaskPower, a Crown corporation, our ministries, to continue to improve our Saskatchewan content, abiding by our trade agreements, but improve the opportunity for Saskatchewan people to be employed in the infrastructure that we are investing in in this province on their behalf. And we'll continue to endeavour to do that through Priority Saskatchewan, through

what we hear as members of the Government of Saskatchewan to ensure that we provide that opportunity to the greatest degree possible while ensuring that we are also protecting the investment of the people that we represent, the investment of the infrastructure that we are procuring.

In the case of the Regina bypass, Mr. Chair, it's as I said. A \$1.88 billion investment, an important investment that, you know, encompasses, encircles this city, allows our products to not only get in and out of the city safely but to get around the city up to our largest city in this province, of Saskatoon, for instance, to get around on our transcontinental highway that passes through Regina. But no longer will those heavy trucks have to pass, for example, through Regina and possibly, maybe down Dewdney Avenue, which was an issue here for a number of months. And so I know there is some silent support for that infrastructure project from the members opposite, Mr. Chair, as we're moving that product out of the city, out of our neighbourhoods onto the highway where it belongs.

[17:00]

More importantly is the safety of our families, Mr. Chair. And we'll go back a few years to, we were having other discussions on the floor of this Assembly with the ability of some of our youth, some of our young drivers, some of our drivers gaining access on and off of the No. 1 Highway east of Regina. And now, Mr. Chair, I think in fairness, we are much safer with our entry and access onto our No. 1 Highway, much safer with our entry and access into the capital city of Regina as well as cities around the perimeter — White City, Balgonie, for example — which is the precipitous and I think the reason that we can all be thankful for this investment.

This project created 8,200 jobs during its construction period. Graham, Broda construction were some of the main contractors involved with this. In fact, 97 Saskatchewan companies were involved in the design and the construction, representing about 71 per cent of the companies involved, Mr. Chair. These businesses have offices in this province. They pay taxes in this province, Mr. Chair. And I can run through the list, Mr. Chair.

This is the record of the Saskatchewan Party government. This is the record that we have. I don't have the dollars available with respect to where they are, Mr. Chair, but the fact of the matter is, it's 71 per cent — 71 per cent of the companies that were involved in that particular project were from this province, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chair. They have offices in this province, and the people that are employed with them as well as the company themselves pay provincial income tax.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you. Now you can't possibly expect, the Premier can't possibly expect the people of Saskatchewan to believe that if a Saskatchewan company had built that project that 80 per cent of the dollars would still have been leaving the province. That doesn't make any sense.

We've got 555 million on Chinook power station leaving the province for a 680 million project, over 80 per cent. If we apply that to the Regina bypass, that's \$1.5 billion leaving the province instead of staying here. So the question is, why hasn't the Premier been willing to do that math and tell us what's going on?

But he doesn't. And this isn't the first time we've asked that. It isn't the first time we've asked and it isn't the first time this Premier and others have stonewalled and refused to give us a straight answer on that question. So we'll leave that question for now. We'll ask about something else.

You know what? We've got a minimum wage that back in 2007 — we'll go back in time for a moment here — it was 7.95, not very much; 7.95 an hour you can't do very well on. But it was a nickel below the highest minimum wage in the country, which was \$8 at the time.

Now the highest minimum wage in the country is \$15. Here in Saskatchewan it's \$11.06. And we actually have the current, in this province, the third-lowest take-home pay for workers for this province, in the country. So my question for the Premier is, why is he so committed to making sure that Saskatchewan workers — Saskatchewan people are working hard, working full time in tough jobs — so committed to making sure they're making the least in the country? And by what year, and I'd like the Premier to listen to this part of it, by what year will we have a \$15 minimum wage in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To just address the first preamble of the question with respect to investment in capital, as I said, 2.7 billion, 2.6, \$2.7 billion this past year in capital across government, Mr. Chair — an admirable investment. It includes the Chinook power plant, which we talked about. And I would just put forward this. I talked with respect to the contractors that were based in Saskatchewan that were working on that particular project. But I would also put forward this. That was an investment that was actually in the province of Saskatchewan. It was an investment where the jobs were actually in the province of Saskatchewan, of which local contracting companies did have the opportunity to participate in.

That is unlike, to again just step out of the now for a moment, investment under the previous administration. The \$70 million that SaskTel had invested in Navigata, for instance, consequently wrote that down to \$15 million a few years later. The \$16 million that was invested in Network Services Inc. in the '90s by SaskTel as well. Later that particular company actually was shut down. That was investment that was lost and was not made in the province and no Saskatchewan people had the opportunity to work on that type of an investment. Nor did they on this next one, the \$12 million that was invested in the country of Chile in Gas Sur, which was an investment by SaskEnergy. That one they didn't do too bad. They got \$1 million back of a \$12 million investment. And on the Retx software company in the very close jurisdiction of Atlanta, SaskTel put \$25 million into that company between 2000 and 2004. The company didn't quite get off the ground so we recorded a 100 per cent loss in that particular instance. Again, investment that wasn't very profitable from the perspective of the investor, didn't provide the opportunity for any jobs here in the province, an investment that wasn't even made within the province.

So we will stand behind our investment in infrastructure and continue to work with our local contractors so that they can participate in every way possible, Mr. Chair, in the \$2.7 billion that we continue to invest in hospitals, in schools, in power infrastructure, in long-term care facilities, and other services that the people ask us to, here in the province.

With respect to the minimum wage here in Saskatchewan, as we know and have went through this conversation over the course of the last number of years . . . I've seen this in my time being an elected individual, where we passed a law, Mr. Chair, that fixed our minimum wage increases to a formula, a formula that was well discussed in this Assembly. A formula that is based in part on the average hourly wage that's available in the province, in part on the consumer price index here in the province, Mr. Chair. And it is not an entirely correct statement to say, well the minimum wage is this, so this, because there is different costs of living that are present across the nation. And I think, in fairness, everyone would most certainly acknowledge that. They should also most certainly acknowledge the fact that our minimum wage in this province has increased 10 times since 2007.

Here's some facts that go along with the minimum wage here in the province. We have reduced taxes for full-time workers in this province by some 20 per cent. In fact, in this province, we have the second-lowest provincial tax and utility burden than any country at every income level available. In fact, a family of four in Saskatchewan actually pays absolutely no provincial income tax on the first \$50,495 that they earn. This is the highest, the highest tax-free threshold in the nation. We have removed 112,000 people off the provincial tax rolls entirely.

Mr. Chair, these are important notes to take into account when we look at the overall affordability of living in this province. Our rate of affordability when it comes to our utility costs also are important, as we have the lowest auto insurance rates among the major provinces, and we have the lowest overall provincial natural gas delivery rates across the provinces, Mr. Chair. Actually compared to Alberta, our utility costs for the average home in Saskatchewan are nearly \$1,500 less per year. That got a little larger when Alberta had an NDP carbon tax, has shrunk now a little bit that we have a federally imposed carbon tax on our hard-working families here in the province.

Mr. Chair, and I would just close with this. If the Leader of the Opposition and the NDP actually do care like they indicate they do, that they care so much about the low-income earners in this province, they should remember the walk that they walked when they had the opportunity. Mr. Chair, a person earning minimum wage today in Saskatchewan earns about \$6,000 more each year than they did in 2007 under the NDP. So they earn about \$6,000 more.

Here's the thing. Here's the thing, and the members opposite are going to want to listen to this. Today in Saskatchewan, even with that \$6,000 more a year increase in income, that same minimum wage earner actually pays about \$200 a year less in provincial income tax. They're making 6,000 more; they're paying \$200 less. Yet, Mr. Chair, we see people under the NDP that were making less money and yet the NDP government was taking more of it in taxes.

Mr. Meili: — Let's look at the facts for a moment. Since 2007, the minimum wage has increased by 39 per cent in this province. That is the lowest increase in minimum wage in that time. When we look at take-home pay, we hear them squawking about, oh, we've lowered their taxes. Well the fact of the matter is take-home pay is the third lowest in the country for minimum wage workers. If you're a minimum wage worker, if you're a minimum wage worker in this province, third-lowest take-home

pay. If you're a minimum wage worker in this province, you bring home \$19,800 a year take-home pay.

Now we can talk about the comparatives from here to now or province to province. But actually what really makes a difference, what makes a difference is the quality of life that this affords people. If you're a worker earning \$19,800 a year, well hey, if you live in Saskatoon, on average you're paying \$10,000 a year for food, \$16,000 a year for shelter. That doesn't leave any money. If you're a family with two kids, that's what you're paying. If you don't have two incomes, even if you have two incomes, you can't afford to pay for telephone, to pay for rent, to pay for food.

What does this Premier want to say when he sees somebody who's a full-time worker working for minimum wage? You sit down in front of that person. What are you going to say to them? And say, you know what, you're not worth it. It doesn't matter that this is too expensive for you. We can't afford to increase the minimum wage. Mr. Speaker, we can't afford not to increase the minimum wage. When will this government see a \$15 minimum wage? Are we going to have to wait until 2052?

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Chair, with respect to what I would say to any individual in this province that is working hard in their communities, working hard for their family, Mr. Chair, is that I will do everything possible to increase the strength of our economy so that they have every opportunity to improve the career that they have chosen, all the while doing everything possible to decrease their tax load here in the province so that they can actually take more of the dollars that they earn home to invest in themselves and their family and their home and in their life and making a better life for those that they care about.

[17:15]

Part of doing that is ensuring that we do everything we can to not reach into their pockets, not reach into their pockets, Mr. Chair. So I would say this to that minimum-wage earner — and the number that was put out was \$19,800 — when you take into account that what I had just said where they are earning \$6,000 more a year today than they were under the NDP, they're paying \$200 less a year in provincial income tax, that that \$19,800 is \$6,200 more than it was under the NDP.

Mr. Meili: — And how much more expensive is life, including an additional \$800 a year on PST put in by this government? Now things cost a lot more than they did in 2007. People who are working full time on minimum wage are in poverty under this government.

Now we've got some other folks who were hard-working people, people who work seasonal work, people who don't have a lot of opportunities but do really important work for this province. And with the recent creation of the Public Safety Agency, a problem has arisen where it's put some question of what will happen to the health plan benefits of 450 to 500 affected employees who are labour service employees. They fight fires. They lay their lives on the line to protect our communities, to protect our forests. Some of these people would be neighbours of the Premier in the North of the province. Just as their service is critical to this province in times of need, their health benefits need to be protected as well. These are not highly paid workers, but their

work is very important and their service can't be over-valued.

On April 3rd the Premier received a letter from the Chair of the current bargaining unit calling for a fix to an unfortunate consequence where the movement of this bargaining unit into the new Public Safety Agency puts their health benefits at risk. The Chair has yet to receive a response.

Most of these folks are from the North. Most are Indigenous. We've got 450 families who can't afford to be exposed to undue hardship. Can the Premier provide the assurance right now that these workers will keep their health benefits, no matter which bargaining unit they're in?

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the member opposite for this particular question. He's correct. I am aware of individuals that are affected by this discussion, personal acquaintances and friends of just, I guess, a function of where I live in this province, as I have friends that work in the wildfire management division of the Ministry of Environment.

And I would put forward that these are some of the hardest working and bravest individuals that I know. And they have more than once kept the community where I live safe. They've kept communities in around me safe over the course of the not too many years ago. Most recently, I saw not those individuals but their counterparts in the municipal departments putting out a fire just right in the Holbein area actually, just a couple of weeks ago.

Mr. Chair, with respect to the benefits that are being discussed, this is not the floor to discuss, you know, benefits or any labour negotiations that are going on. But I will say this; there is applications which are in place. The unions, the public sector unions, I understand, involved in this are working with the Labour Relations Board. And we look forward to a positive outcome on behalf of not only the employer, the Government of Saskatchewan, but the employees, the people that live, in many cases, in northern Saskatchewan or in the community where I live, so that they can continue to have the benefits that I think are expected in this line of work and other lines of work, Mr. Chair.

And this is, I think in fairness, a very valid concern that these individuals have. And we look forward to a positive outcome so that we can continue to have them provide the safety and security to my community and so many others across northern Saskatchewan and across our province that we ask them to provide, and they do, day in and day out.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you for your concern on this. I do however think it's an easier fix than you suggest. This isn't a matter of negotiation. It's simply a matter of committing that they can keep their health plan regardless of the bargaining unit they end up in. The union is onside with this. This is a decision for the government to make. Can you please do that?

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Chair, I'd just say, it's my understanding that it isn't quite that simple. There's more than one public sector union that is involved in this discussion and, you know, we look forward to a positive outcome.

Mr. Meili: — The Minister of Education has referred, on a number of occasions, to the increased costs to the school system because of the application of the federal carbon price. I believe

he used the number of \$8 million. That raises two questions for me. One, does that mean that that's an \$8 million increase that school boards are going to be paying and without any help from this provincial government to adjust for that increase? And will we then have to see programs lost, people losing jobs, etc., as a result?

But it also begs a larger question in terms of fiscal management. Now clearly that wouldn't be the only ministry in which there would be increased costs as a result of this application. Why is there no mention of that in this year's budget? And what risks does that pose to our bottom line this year?

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Chair, the \$8 million that was alluded to was the number that was provided to the Minister of Education from the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. The broader cost to government is there in certain areas but not as substantial as, you know, what might have been previously, if you will.

For example, the cost to the fuel that is utilized by the Government of Saskatchewan, some of that will be absorbed in rates that are paid for personal mileage. Some of that has been greatly reduced and can be absorbed, if you will, on the vehicle fuel that is utilized across government. And we don't use aviation fuel as we sold our planes from the executive air service, Mr. Chair.

So there will be some cost with respect to our ambulance. There'll be some costs with respect to our vehicles, our CVA [central vehicle agency] fleet, if you will. It will be a reasonably manageable cost, Mr. Chair. But I think this also speaks to what the intent of this entire policy is, is to actually reduce emissions, of which we will not see that happen here in this province with this policy.

The \$8 million that was referred to with respect to the education facilities and are on to the heating costs that the government may or may not experience. It has always been indicated that in some ways or many ways they would be exempt. Now it's been indicated that 10 per cent of the collection will be returned to small businesses. It'll be returned to education facilities. It'll be returned to post-secondary education facilities as well. It'll be returned to health care facilities, our hospitals and long-term care centres across the province in communities right across this province.

To date we have not yet been provided any details on how those rebates would actually be accessed. I know this is of great concern to the small business community. I've heard comments from CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business] members with respect to how can we actually access this fund, this 10 per cent fund that Minister McKenna, the federal Environment minister, has indicated would be there. We don't know that, to tell the Saskatchewan School Boards Association how they may be able to access that fund to offset this \$8 million federal charge, this carbon tax charge that is coming from our federal government with this flawed policy. We don't know how to access that fund for our hospitals, for example. How would we be able to access that fund to offset that charge that is being charged on our hospitals?

So to date we don't have details on precisely how this program will work, Mr. Chair. But we do know that it is a flawed program

and the federal government should revisit the enacting of this on hard-working families in this province as well as enacting this tax on our hospitals and our schools and on our other provincial infrastructure.

Mr. Meili: — It's disappointing to see that failure to plan, failure to think ahead about what the impact of such a large policy change would be. Clearly, this wasn't mentioned in a single budget document, wasn't thought through.

I don't think it's been thought through either in terms of we didn't see this affecting any of the economic projections. And we saw the Sask Party putting out these inflammatory predictions that this was going to cause the next Great Depression. Clearly, that was bad math.

But there will be impacts. There will be economic impacts. Why isn't this worked in? Well, what are the economic impacts, for that matter, of Prairie Resilience? What is the impact of the choices this government has made on the heavy-emitter price on pollution they've put in place. How will that impact the economic forecast coming forward? And lastly, why, when we've had time to prepare for this, has this government not planned both for its own expenditures, as well as for costs for regular people?

[17:30]

We now know that we're going to be taking a court case to the Supreme Court and that will take years on end. What is the Premier's Plan B to make sure that we're not stuck for several years with a cost through this tax that will make life more difficult, especially for rural families, for people who have to heat their homes, for people in agriculture. Because I've seen nothing in a Plan B. All I've seen is political games and making the rest of us pay the cost.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Chair, I want to read in a couple of comments that were made post the balanced budget that we introduced in this House this March. First is from the CIBC [Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce], Mr. Chair, and it goes like this:

Saskatchewan delivered a budget consistent with its steady hand approach to prudent fiscal management, continuing the track record of the Saskatchewan Party. Today's budget, the second under Premier Scott Moe, delivers on its commitment to be back in balance in 2019/20.

We highlighted . . . Well, Mr. Chair, I'll go on. In the essence of time, I'll go on to the next one by DBRS [Dominion Bond Rating Service Ltd.]:

While not without its challenges [I quote, while not without challenges], the budget outlook is much improved, and the credit profile has stabilized. Beyond fulfilling the government's commitment to balance the budget, the 2019 budget provides more insight into Premier Scott Moe's policy and priorities.

It reiterates the Saskatchewan Party's long-standing commitment to a pro-growth agenda, a low and competitive tax regime, balanced budgets, low debt, while also providing the modest funding increases to several priority

areas, including mental health, including children and families.

BMO [Bank of Montreal] went on to say:

The province of Saskatchewan has stuck to its plan to balance the books this fiscal year, and the borrowing program has slimmed alongside lower capital spending — both are positive developments from a credit perspective.

Scotiabank: "This was a stay-the-course budget that is unlikely to impact Saskatchewan credit ratings or economic growth outlook."

All positive reports from the major banks, which we will meet with over the course of the next couple of days to ensure that we continue to communicate to them the low tax growth, Mr. Chair, the high economic growth that we desire here in this province.

With respect to the preamble again to the question, Mr. Chair, one thing the people of this province, when it was referenced with respect to our case that was put in front of the Court of Appeal here in the province, of which we'll be appealing to the Supreme Court of Canada, that's the case of the imposed federal carbon tax on hard-working Saskatchewan families, in addition to the fact that it's ineffective, doesn't reduce emissions, costs families money unnecessarily; in addition to the fact that it'll reduce jobs and threatens the economy and the industries that are operating in our communities across this province; in addition to all of that, Mr. Chair, the fact of the matter is, is that actually 89 per cent of the people in this province support the government's stance when it comes to ensuring we don't have that tax imposed on them, Mr. Chair.

And it's important to note and to clarify the facts, as this is a point of differentiation in this Assembly, where the members opposite actually do support a carbon tax on hard-working Saskatchewan families. And although they've attempted to say something a little different lately, when this was introduced on October the 3rd of 2016, the Leader of the Opposition said at that point in time, and this is a quote, Mr. Chair: "We applaud the federal government's recent announcement of a minimum price on carbon."

You don't have the opportunity, Mr. Chair, to applaud this one day and then say, well we don't actually agree with the way they've done it. You either applaud it or you don't, Mr. Chair, and it's obvious that the members opposite support Justin Trudeau in his federally imposed carbon tax on the people of this province. Mr. Speaker, you'll see no such support on this side of the House.

Mr. Meili: — Actually we think details of policies matter. And we don't approve of and we don't appreciate what the federal backstop looks like, and we don't appreciate the fact that we've been left vulnerable to it. We've been left vulnerable to it here in this province.

You know what? Details also matter when it comes to education. And I asked the Premier today, I asked the Premier today and yesterday about class sizes because we know that there are classes of over 30, over 40 kids in this province. And they tried to tell me that oh, the average is 19. Well if you've got a class

with 6 kids and a class with 32 kids, yes, the average is 19.

But those are very different realities, very different realities. And that's the reality for schools across this country. Too many kids for one teacher. Too many kids for one teacher. Not enough EAs [educational assistant] supporting kids who are learning English or French as an additional language. Not enough kids to support children with special needs.

Now up until 2013, this government actually did track class sizes. And now, suddenly when enrolment starts to grow, when enrolment starts to grow and the per-student funding starts to fall, suddenly they don't want to track class sizes anymore.

So my question for the Premier now he's got the officials today. He didn't know the answer earlier. Does he know now? Why did this government stop tracking class sizes, and why won't they start again?

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to our work that the Ministry of Education, the Minister of Education, his Legislative Secretary and officials do with our education sector partners across the province on class size, as we said the average class size that we report on is 19 at this current time. We're aware there's classes that are larger than that. We're aware there are classes that are smaller than that. We work with our education sector, and the reason quite frankly with respect to the average reporting, that's where we have arrived at through working with our sector.

Mr. Chair, with respect to the investment to ensure that we are doing right by that sector, as we represent the families — and we all, in many cases, do have children that are in our schools across the province — we have made sure that this is a priority for us not just, I would say, in the past year, but over the course of our opportunity to serve as the government of Saskatchewan.

We have continually increased our investment in this sector. We've taken it from, quite frankly, an investment of less than a billion dollars, up to this past year of \$2.48 billion, just under \$2.5 billion investment. Mr. Chair, a significant lift in capital investment. A significant lift in our operating investment, most recently a significant investment over the course of the last couple of years directly into our classrooms, providing supports for those children so that they can ensure that they have every opportunity to learn in an environment and quite possibly a new or renovated school. That's learning in an environment where they have the supports in the teacher, in the teacher's assistant, and the educational assistant that would be in the classroom, as well as speech pathology, special needs supports, Mr. Chair.

These all take investment. And that has been investment that, yes again, we know as we move forward through the years, we need to continue to make education a priority. And I'm here to say that we will make education a priority, Mr. Chair, because of the importance of it to, not just us in this room, but the importance of it to our broader society as our next generation comes through our education sector ultimately participating in our economy and quite likely standing on the floor of this Assembly in a number of years.

That's why we have invested in 46 brand new schools across the province, Mr. Chair. We aren't closing schools here in

Saskatchewan. I know, and I've said it here myself many times, the members opposite closed 176 schools in the province of Saskatchewan in their opportunity. That actually, that actually, Mr. Chair, equates to about one a month. They closed a school a month for their time in government, Mr. Chair. Most certainly a record that we would not want to strive to achieve, Mr. Chair . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Despite what the member from Saskatoon Centre is saying, Mr. Chair, from his seat, the fact of the matter is, is that he was part of a government that closed a school a month, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, we are now, through the investment that we have, not only do we have 46 new schools in this province, but in those schools we have 925 more teachers. Those teachers are educating our children, our next generation, our best and brightest.

And, Mr. Chair, to take a walk back out of the present, if you will, the members opposite, during their time of closing their school a month, they also fired 400 teachers and moved them out of the province, Mr. Chair. Quite frankly, that was the plan that they had. They had a plan for not only declining population in the province of Saskatchewan, but they had a plan for declining population, declining enrolment in our schools across the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

They did all of this while allowing a truly broken taxation system in our education property tax system to actually operate, Mr. Chair. We had agricultural producers that were protesting, protesting in front of this building to the then NDP government because the education property tax system they had was not fair across the province, Mr. Chair. It was not right. It's an education property tax that was fixed by a legislative secretary of the current government, Mr. Chair, and it has resulted in a municipal revenue-sharing formula that is strong and envied by municipalities across the nation.

[17:45]

That's the record of this government. A record of growth. A record of investment in our schools and in the people offering the service in those schools. An investment in our next generation.

Mr. Meili: — The Premier just said that they've continually upped their investment in education. 2017, they cut it by \$54 million. 2019, now we're back to the same levels as before but we've got 7,000 more students.

I would love him to go into a classroom and tell the kids in that classroom, hey, I know you're struggling. I know we don't have autism services for you. I know we don't have the supports you need. But you know, the NDP did something bad in the '90s, so forget about that.

Now there's another group of kids I think we should be talking about. There's the problem of the kids in school today and the challenges in our classroom, but there's another big problem. One in four kids in this province live in poverty. One in four children in this province go to bed hungry. One in four children in this province have a real struggle to face. And our problems might seem big in here, but that's kids who go to school without getting a breakfast in the morning. That's kids who don't have a room of their own and maybe don't even have a safe place to stay at night.

You know, where is the action on this? We've seen a government that's been 100 per cent asleep when it comes to child poverty, and in fact we've seen a government that cut the rental housing supplement. No interest in counting how many kids are in classrooms. No interest in counting how many kids are in classrooms, how many people are homeless as a result of this government's decisions, how many people are out on the street because this government didn't wait until the federal program came in and said yank, no more rental housing supplement for you.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With respect to recent changes made to the rental housing supplement here in the province of Saskatchewan, nobody currently on the program will be affected by these changes. All that are on the program are grandfathered into the existing program.

With respect to any new applicants that may be having a challenge qualifying, Mr. Chair, we would say that we continue to have 3,000 vacant units in our Sask Housing inventory and we would ask those individuals to reach out and look into the opportunity that they would be able to access one of those 3,000 units that we have. The vacancy of our housing units has not changed over the course of the last changes that have been made.

Mr. Chair, this brings us back to the broader discussion with respect to what are we doing to alleviate and to reduce the number of families, but the number of children as well, that are living in poverty in this province. And I go back to a study that was done by Statistics Canada, the income survey study that was done between 2007-2017. And it says that the percentage of all people in low-income households decreased. It decreased from 14.6 per cent in 2007 to 9.5 per cent in 2017.

When we get to children living in low-income households, Mr. Chair, that decrease is even larger, a decrease from 21 per cent in 2007 down to 10.3 per cent in 2017. Mr. Chair, these are important numbers. They are important numbers that I would put forward have come about from initiatives that have removed, let's say, 112,000 people in this province from the provincial tax roll altogether.

Important numbers, Mr. Chair, that show that the plan that we are putting forward, albeit more work to do, is working. Important numbers that support the fact that we have personal and spousal child exemption amounts that have increased twice in this province over the course of the last decade. We have enhanced the low-income tax credit by \$100 per adult, \$40 for a child, and as we say, a family of four in this province pays no provincial income tax on the first \$51,600. Mr. Chair, as I said, that is the highest tax-free threshold in the nation of Canada. These individuals, as we said, minimum wage earners in this province today are taking home \$6,200 more than they would under the NDP, Mr. Speaker. All the while, we've been able to invest in those 46 schools I had discussed earlier. In those schools are 7,100 new child care spaces for families to utilize in their community.

We've invested \$200 million in child care since 2007, another investment that I'm happy to speak to, I'm proud of, Mr. Chair, as members on this side of the House are proud to make an investment in our families in communities across this province over the course of the last decade, an investment that they can

most assuredly understand will continue into the future.

Mr. Meili: — Now we heard the Premier use a number there of 10 per cent child poverty in the province. Of course those who are familiar with statistics, as the minister would be, would understand that that number from Statistics Canada doesn't include First Nations children. First Nations children on reserve in Saskatchewan, we see a poverty level of approximately 60 per cent. That's when we get up to that one-quarter of the children in this province living in poverty. The fact that the minister wants to trek out numbers that don't include First Nations children is analogous to how much concern this government has shown for First Nations children in their history.

Now one of the areas in which we've seen a huge impact on First Nations children is when it comes to mental health: First Nations and Métis children, children on and off reserve, children in northern Saskatchewan. The numbers of kids who are waiting — for example in Saskatoon over 300 kids waiting for an appointment right now — but the number of kids who are waiting for mental health care is through the roof.

When we look into northern Saskatchewan, so many communities where kids are struggling, they have no options at all. There's no one there to help them when they need it. And what is the result of that? The result is that we see rates of suicide among First Nations girls, rates of suicide at 29.7 times girls in the rest of the population. When it comes to boys, it's 6.4 times higher than non-First Nations boys. When will this government actually take action, actually give some hope for the northern kids who are struggling so much?

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Chair, I'll go through just maybe a few investments from two or three different departments that I think are important to acknowledge in light of the investment that we have and continue to make in all communities across the province, including First Nations communities.

First and foremost, in education, Mr. Chair, we continue to invest in education. We have \$6 million that is ongoing funding, and that is in response to recommendations from the joint task force. Mr. Chair, 2.4 million of those dollars are continued to the invitational shared service initiative of 1.6 to support Following Their Voices; 1 million to support Help Me Tell My Story, investments in software and additional investments in our education of again all of the people in the province, but also in First Nations communities.

And we continue to work with our First Nations communities and other communities to make every effort to increase our graduation rates of all of our youth across the province. And it's starting to show some results, Mr. Chair. Again, much more work to do, but our Indigenous grad rates are at their highest point in the course of the last 20 years, and that's important for us to acknowledge. We continue to invest, and we were the first provincial jurisdiction to actually invest in on-reserve adult basic education, to give those that maybe didn't get through on time the first time the opportunity to receive their grade 12 education through our advanced education investments, Mr. Chair. This is important for us to acknowledge.

We continue to invest and target our investment in First Nations and Métis initiatives and institutions in advanced education. I

think of the SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies] institute. I think of GDI [Gabriel Dumont Institute], Mr. Chair. I think of the good work done at the First Nations University. I think of the work that is done by those institutes and others that is done actually right in our First Nations communities, for example some of the agreements that we have made with the forest management agreements, Mr. Chair, which I'll come back to in just a moment.

Thirty million dollars invested in mental health this particular year, a record investment in mental health for all of Saskatchewan people, Mr. Chair. We continue to use those dollars to invest in mental health for all of the people in this province. We have invested in northern Saskatchewan, participating in a number of different initiatives in northern Saskatchewan including the four adult and two child psychiatrists that are providing and visiting monthly in person; Telehealth appointments in a number of northern communities; a new child psychiatrist in Prince Albert providing consultations via Telehealth, telephone; an adult psychiatrist from Prince Albert that is providing consultation to patients across the North as needed.

Now, Mr. Chair, this is where we are very proud of our investment in First Nations communities. And I will tell a quick tale of what I have seen first-hand with respect to that investment, Mr. Chair. Through agreements that we have with First Nations communities, and I mentioned the forest management agreements that we have, I have seen First Nations communities take the profits that they've been able to make from those forest management agreements that come about from an agreement with this government, Mr. Chair, this government and those communities. They've taken those profits and they have reinvested them in their community. They have reinvested them in post-secondary education facilities, in this case right in the community where they have made agreements then with the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies.

They made agreements with the First Nations University, the University of Saskatchewan, and others, Sask Polytech, to train their community members in their community for jobs, ultimately that will be in their community or in the vicinity of that area so that the people can have the hope for a career and for employment in the community where they live. I've seen this, Mr. Chair, and the spark and the precipitous was that forest management agreement signed so many years ago.

[18:00]

Now we see those individuals actually being trained in that community to go back and work into the forest, in the actual forest industry where this all started, and owning their own forestry companies, going to work in their own forestry companies in the timber industry, Mr. Chair. Certainly a wise agreement and an agreement that those communities have most certainly moved on.

Mr. Chair, there's been much discussion about how we share this investment, whether it'd be the additional \$30 million that was invested in mental health supports for all the people of the province, how we work with our communities across this province so that they can engage in the broader economy, how we share the revenues of the provincial government, if you will,

our natural resource revenues, with communities across the province. And this is another point over the course of the last number of years where there has been some differentiation between members on this side of the House and the members of the NDP.

I harken back to the first election I ran in, the 2011 election when Dwain Lingenfelter and the NDP ran on a policy of resource revenue sharing with our First Nations, Mr. Chair. Near the end of the 2015 term — they weren't successful in that election, I might add — the then NDP leader, Cam Broten, he quietly reversed that policy. He said the NDP no longer support resource revenue sharing with First Nations. So they backed up that policy. They didn't feel that was one the NDP actually supported.

Mr. Chair, at that particular time, at that particular time the . . . At that particular time the now current Opposition Leader was harshly critical. He was harshly critical of that reversal. Mr. Chair, he called it an . . .

[Interjections]

The Chair: — I'd ask members to come to order. The Premier currently has the floor.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Chair, he called it, and I quote: "An embarrassing step backwards and inconsistent with party policy." But since becoming the leader in March he hasn't said anything about resource revenue sharing with First Nations communities. And so I'd ask today, will the Leader of the Opposition clarify the NDP's position on this policy? Does he support resource revenue sharing with First Nations?

Mr. Meili: — That's disappointing, Scott. Sorry, I shouldn't have used your name. I apologize and I withdraw that term. That's disappointing, Mr. Premier. That is not the kind of politics that we would expect someone to play when we ask a question.

Let me repeat the question. The question was about suicide rates in the North of this province. When he tries to play divisive wedge politics with a question of that gravity, it's repulsive. And so let me just get to a very simple . . .

[Interjections]

The Chair: — I'll ask the members to respect the Opposition Leader's right to . . . He currently has the floor, and I ask the members to respect his right to speak.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. We'll give the Premier the chance to answer in a more respectful way.

The member from Cumberland, my colleague, has a bill that's brought forward. And the member from Cumberland has attended too many funerals in his community. This is the reality for northern Saskatchewan. Tomorrow he puts forth a bill that we, as a province, develop a suicide prevention strategy. It's a model that's been tried multiple places. There are models to work off of. There are ways that we can do the work to save lives. Will the Premier and his government support the bill from the member of Cumberland tomorrow?

[Interjections]

The Chair: — Order. I'd ask the members . . . Order. Order. If the members aren't prepared to come to order, I will start identifying individual members.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With respect to the initiatives that we are working on with respect to suicides, not just in the North — I will speak to northern suicides, Mr. Chair — but to suicide strategy here in the province, and again, this is another area where we do need to work hard on behalf of the people that we represent.

And I would just go back to some of the investment in this year's most recent budget, in particular the \$30 million that was increased in the funding for mental health services here in the province. A quarter million of that investment will be to expand the Mental Health Commission of Canada's Roots of Hope suicide prevention initiative in Buffalo Narrows, Mr. Chair, an important initiative. \$300,000 is to help provide 24 hour a day, seven day nursing supports at the La Ronge detox centre, Mr. Chair, an important initiative most certainly for that community, for northern communities, and on this topic.

1.6 million of those dollars is to support the launch of three rapid access to addiction medicine clinics, including one of those in the community of Prince Albert, Mr. Chair. We've provided two and a half million dollars in capital funding to support 10 addiction beds as part of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band's wellness, health, and recovery centre project, and we have \$1 million that we provided specifically for priority projects in the community of La Loche.

So, Mr. Chair, it's fair to say that our government is committed to improving our mental health and addictions services across the province and that includes communities in northern Saskatchewan because suicide in our communities, it's a very serious issue and it's very complex issue, Mr. Chair.

In 2014 we endorsed the 10-year mental health and addictions action plan here in the province, and we continue to make every effort to improve our mental health and addiction services here in Saskatchewan. That includes enhancing our suicide risk assessment that was outlined in that report. Since then we have undertaken a number of suicide prevention initiatives as part of our mental health and addictions action plan. Those include, as I said, as I would indicate, they expanded the number of mental health first aid trainers from 33 to 49 and trained over 2,700 individuals and organizations in mental health first aid.

Mr. Chair, there is so much more to do for us in northern Saskatchewan, in all of our communities in Saskatchewan, to ensure that we are supporting both financially, with investments like this \$30 million increase, but also supporting as individuals in our communities, supporting those that we love, our family members. There is hardly a family in this province that hasn't been touched by suicide, Mr. Chair. And I would put forward that we need to continue to do better in government and we need to continue to look for opportunities for us to do better as individuals in communities in Saskatchewan.

The Chair: — Seeing no members on their feet, I will ask the Premier at this time if he would like to make a short closing comment. And following the Premier, I will then extend the same opportunity to the Leader of the Opposition. I recognize the

Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I would just like to take a moment to thank the Leader of the Opposition and all elected members here today for the opportunity for both of us to clarify our policies on a number of different issues.

Mr. Chair, I thought there might be a few more issues that would be raised here with respect to some of the challenges that we're having with respect to the economy here in the province of Saskatchewan, issues such as the expansion of pipeline projects across our nation, issues such as the trade challenges that we're having with respect to most notably canola, but other products as well, Mr. Chair.

But I do want to thank the member, the Leader of the Opposition, and the members opposite for this opportunity today. I also want to take a moment to thank all of the staff in Executive Council and in all of the offices in this building. Thank you so much for the smile on your face that you bring to work each and every day, but the work that you do on behalf of the people of the province each and every day. And that is not only to the members that work directly in Executive Council but all of the workers in offices, ministers' offices, caucus offices on both sides across this building.

I want to thank the House leadership teams on both sides, of the opposition side and the government side of this Assembly. We go to work each and every day and there is a lot of work that happens before we ever walk into this Assembly to do our service on behalf of the people. And much of that work is put together in each and every morning by the House leadership teams, and I want to thank both of those teams, both elected and unelected, that are doing that work on behalf of, again, the people of this province.

I want to thank all of the staff in this great building, our Legislative Assembly. I want to thank all of the staff in the Speaker's office, the Clerk's office, the Sergeant-at-Arms office, the Pages, and all of the building staff that come to work in this Legislative Assembly, the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, each and every day. They ensure everything runs smoothly and safely here each and every day, and I don't want to leave today without thanking them for what they bring to their job each and every day.

My colleagues on this side of the House and colleagues across the floor, I want to thank you for representing the constituents in your respective constituency, and thank you for the way that you serve with respect to whatever duties that you have been provided on both sides of the House, on the broader service to the people across the province.

And last and most importantly, I would like to thank all of our families, mine included, for supporting us in the work that we do on behalf of the people that we serve in this province. Thank you so much.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your patience with us today. Obviously these are issues of great importance and sometimes our emotions get a little the better of

us, but I do thank the Premier for the debate today.

I too had some other things I would have liked to have asked about. Sometimes the length of consultation and response and decision not to answer directly makes it harder to get to all of the things we'd like to get to. I certainly would have liked to have talked more about the challenges in accessing health care, mental health care, emergency care, surgical waits. I would have liked to talk more about the growing rates of poverty. I would have loved to talk more about the challenges in our classrooms that are more crowded and more complex than they've been in years.

There are real challenges in our province and it's important that we have a chance to have these debates and have these discussions because at the end of the day, everyone who works here . . . I want to thank the staff who work for the government. I want to thank our staff who work for our caucus in opposition. I want to thank all of those that work to keep the legislature running, keep us working according to rules, everybody who plays such an important role keeping us safe, keeping a record of what we do here.

It's essential work and it is all about . . . At the heart of it, it is about putting the people of Saskatchewan first and making the wise choices, the wise investments in people so that we can improve their lives and grow our economy and have the best possible future for this province. That's the work that we on this side are committed to. I know that's the work we're all here to do. And I thank you again for the opportunity for today's debate.

The Chair: — I would like to thank both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition for their concluding remarks. We will proceed to vote the estimates, but before we do that we will excuse the officials.

[18:15]

Okay, members. We're prepared to vote the estimates. We'll start with central management and services (EX01) in the amount of five million, five hundred and fifty-two . . . Sorry, let's try that again. It's been a long afternoon. \$5,520,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — 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 \$1,080,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried. Cabinet secretariat (EX05) in the amount of \$498,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Communications office (EX03) in the amount of \$1,311,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. House business and research (EX08) in the amount of \$245,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Members of Executive Council (EX06) in the amount of 137,000. This amount is statutory. A vote is not required.

Intergovernmental Affairs (EX10) in the amount of \$2,483,000, 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 12 months ending March 31, 2020, the following sums for Executive Council: \$12,323,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. There being no further business before the committee, I would invite a member to move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — 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 Chair: — Carried. That concludes the business of Committee of Finance.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of committees.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the committee to report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

The Speaker: — When shall the committee sit again?

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting. It now being past the ordinary time of adjournment, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 18:20.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Reiter	5939
Mowat	5939
Ottenbreit	5939
Beck	5939
Marit	5940
Bonk	5940
Beaudry-Mellor	5940
Sarauer	5940
Dennis	5940
Fiaz	5940

PRESENTING PETITIONS

McMorris	5940
Vermette	5940
Wotherspoon	5941
Sproule	5941
Mowat	5941
Pedersen	5942

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Rosemont Mount Royal Community Association Makes a Difference	
Wotherspoon	5942
World Ovarian Cancer Day	
Moe	5942
Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day	
Beck	5942
Buckland Fire and Rescue Fundraiser	
Wilson	5943
Swinging with the Stars Fundraiser	
Beaudry-Mellor	5943
Rebels Win Championships	
Marit	5943
Remembering Jean Vanier	
Olauson	5944

QUESTION PERIOD

Measurement of Class Sizes	
Meili	5944
Wyant	5944
Funding for Education	
Beck	5945
Wyant	5945
Funding for Post-Secondary Institutions	
Beck	5946
Beaudry-Mellor	5946
Long-Term Care Facility in La Ronge	
Vermette	5946
Ottenbreit	5946
Construction of Road in Wollaston Lake Area	
Vermette	5947
Carr	5947
Treatment for Methamphetamine Users	
Chartier	5947
Reiter	5947
Crime Rates in Saskatchewan	
Sarauer	5948
Tell	5948

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 617 — <i>The Voluntary Blood Donation Act</i>	
Mowat	5948

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on the Economy	
Young	5949
Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice	
Bradshaw	5950

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies	
Cox	5952
Standing Committee on House Services	
Sarauer	5953
FIRST AND SECOND READINGS OF AMENDMENTS	
Bill No. 140 — <i>The Animal Health Act</i>	
Marit	5949
THIRD READINGS	
Bill No. 140 — <i>The Animal Health Act</i>	
Marit	5949
Bill No. 162 — <i>The Irrigation Act, 2018</i>	
Marit	5949
Bill No. 170 — <i>The Mineral Taxation Amendment Act, 2019</i>	
Eyre	5950
Bill No. 160 — <i>The Trespass to Property Amendment Act, 2018</i>	
Morgan	5951
Wotherspoon	5951
Bill No. 161 — <i>The Trespass to Property Consequential Amendments Act, 2018</i>	
<i>Loi de 2018 corrélatrice de la loi intitulée The Trespass to Property Amendment Act, 2018</i>	
Morgan	5952
Bill No. 171 — <i>The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019</i>	
Harpauer	5952
ORDERS OF THE DAY	
GOVERNMENT ORDERS	
COMMITTEE OF FINANCE	
General Revenue Fund — Executive Council — Vote 10	
Moe	5953
Meili	5954

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Scott Moe

Premier

President of the Executive Council

Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Tina Beaudry-Mellor

Minister of Advanced Education

Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Minister Responsible for Innovation

Hon. Lori Carr

Minister of Highways and Infrastructure

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff

Minister of Central Services

Minister Responsible for the Provincial

Capital Commission

Minister Responsible for Public Service Commission

Hon. Dustin Duncan

Minister of Environment

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Water

Security Agency

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan

Power Corporation

Hon. Bronwyn Eyre

Minister of Energy and Resources

Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan

Water Corporation

Hon. Joe Hargrave

Minister of Crown Investments

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan

Government Insurance

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan

Transportation Company

Hon. Donna Harpauer

Minister of Finance

Hon. Jeremy Harrison

Minister of Trade and Export Development

Minister of Immigration and Career Training

Hon. Warren Kaeding

Minister of Government Relations

Minister Responsible for First Nations, Métis

and Northern Affairs

Hon. Gene Makowsky

Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor

and Gaming Authority

Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan

Hon. David Marit

Minister of Agriculture

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Crop

Insurance Corporation

Hon. Paul Merriman

Minister of Social Services

Hon. Don Morgan

Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety

Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan

Workers' Compensation Board

Minister Responsible for The Global

Transportation Hub Authority

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan

Telecommunications

Hon. Greg Ottenbreit

Minister Responsible for Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Jim Reiter

Minister of Health

Hon. Christine Tell

Minister of Corrections and Policing

Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan

Gaming Corporation

Hon. Gordon Wyant

Deputy Premier

Minister of Education

Minister Responsible for SaskBuilds and

Priority Saskatchewan