



FOURTH SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

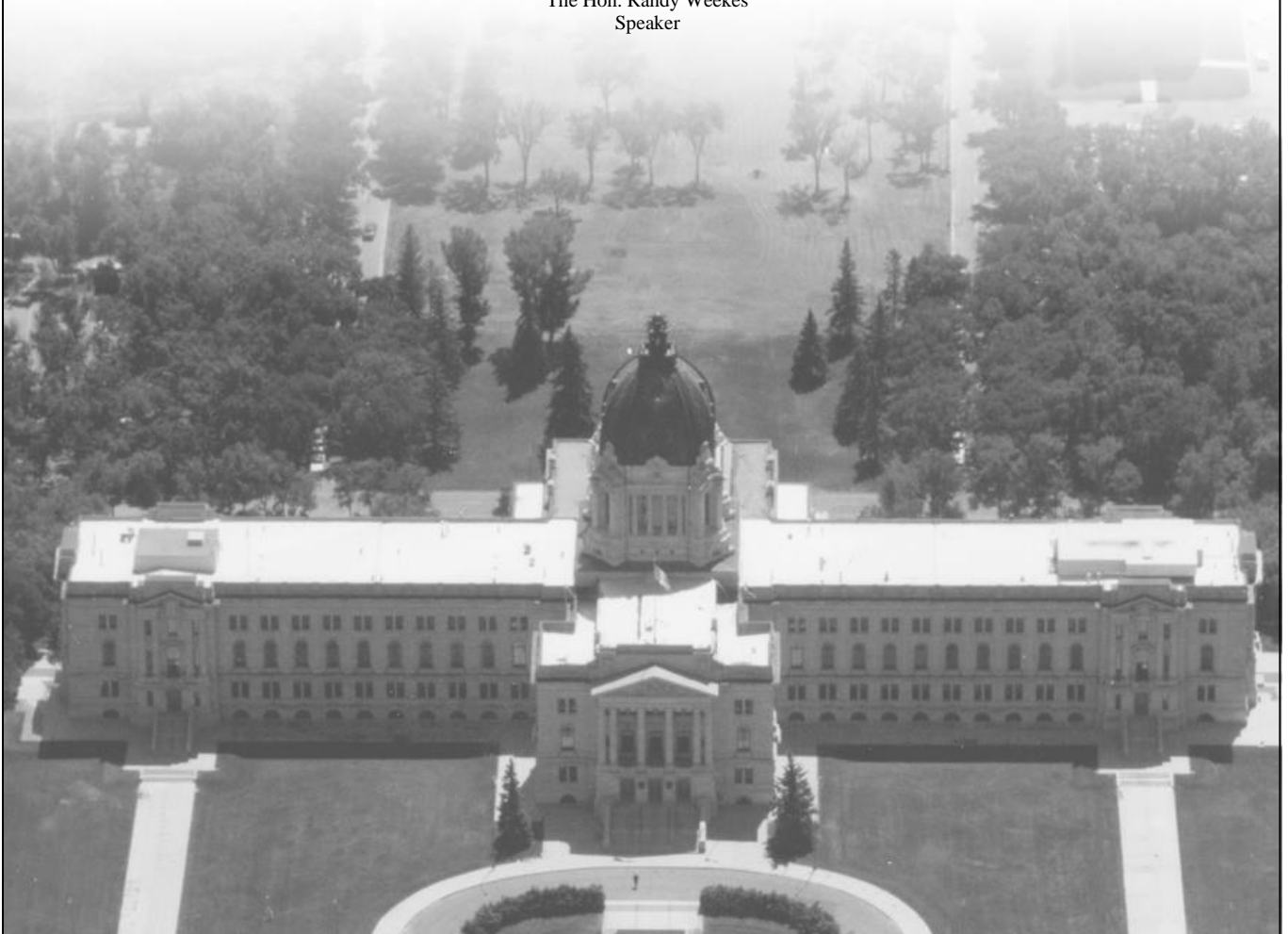
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Randy Weekes
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
4th Session — 29th Legislature

Lieutenant Governor — His Honour the Honourable Russ Mirasty, S.O.M., M.S.M.

Speaker — Hon. Randy Weekes

Premier — Hon. Scott Moe

Leader of the Opposition — Carla Beck

Beck, Carla — Regina Lakeview (NDP)

Bonk, Steven — Moosomin (SP)

Bowes, Jennifer — Saskatoon University (NDP)

Bradshaw, Fred — Carrot River Valley (SP)

Buckingham, David — Saskatoon Westview (SP)

Burki, Noor — Regina Coronation Park (NDP)

Carr, Hon. Lori — Estevan (SP)

Cheveldayoff, Ken — Saskatoon Willowgrove (SP)

Clarke, Jared — Regina Walsh Acres (NDP)

Cockrill, Hon. Jeremy — The Battlefords (SP)

Conway, Meara — Regina Elphinstone-Centre (NDP)

Dennis, Terry — Canora-Pelly (SP)

Domotor, Ryan — Cut Knife-Turtleford (Ind.)

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

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

Fiaz, Muhammad — Regina Pasqua (SP)

Francis, Ken — Kindersley (SP)

Friesen, Marv — Saskatoon Riversdale (SP)

Goudy, Todd — Melfort (SP)

Grewal, Gary — Regina Northeast (SP)

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

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

Harrison, Daryl — Cannington (SP)

Harrison, Hon. Jeremy — Meadow Lake (SP)

Hindley, Hon. Everett — Swift Current (SP)

Jenson, Terry — Martensville-Warman (SP)

Kaeding, Warren — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)

Keisig, Travis — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)

Kirsch, Delbert — Batoche (SP)

Lambert, Lisa — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)

Lawrence, Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (Ind.)

Lemaigre, Jim — Athabasca (SP)

Love, Matt — Saskatoon Eastview (NDP)

Makowsky, Hon. Gene — Regina Gardiner Park (SP)

Marit, Hon. David — Wood River (SP)

McLeod, Blaine — Lumsden-Morse (SP)

McLeod, Hon. Tim — Moose Jaw North (SP)

McMorris, Hon. Don — Indian Head-Milestone (SP)

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

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

Morgan, Hon. Don — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)

Mowat, Vicki — Saskatoon Fairview (NDP)

Nerlien, Hugh — Kelvington-Wadena (SP)

Nippi-Albright, Betty — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)

Ottenbreit, Greg — Yorkton (SP)

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

Ritchie, Erika — Saskatoon Nutana (NDP)

Ross, Alana — Prince Albert Northcote (SP)

Ross, Hon. Laura — Regina Rochdale (SP)

Sarauer, Nicole — Regina Douglas Park (NDP)

Skoropad, Dana — Arm River (SP)

Steele, Doug — Cypress Hills (SP)

Teed, Nathaniel — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)

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

Vermette, Doyle — Cumberland (NDP)

Weekes, Hon. Randy — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)

Wilson, Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (Ind.)

Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)

Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)

Young, Aleana — Regina University (NDP)

Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

Standings

Government Caucus: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 44; Opposition Caucus: New Democratic Party (NDP) — 14;

Independent: Saskatchewan United Party (Ind.) — 1; Independent — 2

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Iris Lang

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

Deputy Clerk — Kathy Burianyk

Principal Clerk — Robert Park

Sergeant-at-Arms — Lyall Frederiksen

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Legislative Assembly are available
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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to welcome some individuals who are seated in your gallery. And it's the third time during this sitting that we've had a delegation from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation come to join us in what we do here in the Assembly, and I want to thank them for that, for being here once again.

A few names I'd like to put out there today and offer a warm welcome, and I ask all members to join me in this. Samantha Becotte, president of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, is here once again. She's joined by Vice-President Nathan Bromm, who's here today; along with Bobbi Taillefer, executive director of the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation]; Melissa Gerlach, the president of the Regina Public Schools Teachers' Association, Chris Kampman, president of Regina Catholic Schools Teachers' Association; and as well Whitney Paul-Joseph is here. And I want to single out that Whitney has attempted to join us here for question period on three different occasions, each time stymied by Saskatchewan winter roads. So we're thankful that she's made it here today.

And Whitney, I know, is very concerned about the teaching profession, and she says education in Saskatchewan is not what it once was. Many aspects of being a teacher have become increasingly difficult, and she worries about the many young teachers in this province who are leaving the profession due to excessive workload and job stress.

I want to thank all these individuals for being here today as well as the other teachers who have joined us here in the other galleries to witness proceedings. I ask all members in the Assembly to join me in a warm welcome to these individuals.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member opposite here today in welcoming Samantha, Nathan, and the whole delegation from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation back to their legislature here today. I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their legislature.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I'd like to welcome three special guests from my hometown of Wolseley. We have Natasha Perras, Janelle Bieber, and Vance Weber.

They're here today representing Wolseley, and Wolseley has now been named as one of the top four finalists in Kraft Hockeyville Canada. There will be a little bit more about that

coming in a member's statement later. But I just want to say with these three individuals, we all know that our communities run on volunteers, and when you want something done, you give that task to a busy person. That's these three people, and I just want to commend them for the good work they do in Wolseley. I'd like to ask all members of this Assembly to help me welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member opposite and welcome the very good folks from Wolseley here today — wearing a good-looking Mustangs jersey there here today as well — to celebrate their efforts in having Wolseley earn the title of Kraft Hockeyville in Canada this year. It's very appropriate. I urge all folks to get behind this effort.

And we know how important hockey is to communities across Saskatchewan. Certainly that's the case in Wolseley. They have a great rink, great teams, and a great community. And I want to commend these leaders for their efforts to earn that title and the dollars and support to invest in Wolseley. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, while still on my feet, I want to give a brief but warm shout-out and thanks and welcome to Megz Reynolds who's seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. This is a leader in agriculture. Megz is an amazing person, an adventurer, an amazing parent to two young girls, someone that has farmed, Mr. Speaker. She's been very active over the years with the agricultural producers of Saskatchewan, speaking at Ag in Motion and the Crop Production Show and many shows in Saskatchewan and also across North America.

Very importantly, she's been a leader around mental health and agriculture and that intersection and making sure that the supports are there and the systems are there to support producers who face such serious mental health challenges, Mr. Speaker. Her work is remarkable, needs to be commended. She's very active in leading Do More Ag at the current point in time. It's my pleasure to welcome her to her Assembly.

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

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief. I just wanted to thank the organizing committee from Wolseley for coming to attend today. I attended a meeting and I have to say, these people know how to get stuff done.

And we're going to encourage each and every person in Saskatchewan when it comes time to vote: vote, vote, vote often and vote a lot because votes matter to ensure that Moosomin will be picked as Kraft . . . or rather, Wolseley will be picked as — not Moosomin; the member from Moosomin was at the committee meeting — that Wolseley will be picked as Kraft Hockeyville. They're a wonderful organization and they are excited to put their fingers to the voting button and make sure that this community is number one in Canada. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Friesen: — Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's a great day in Regina; I'll tell you why, Mr. Speaker. My son is here today, Christopher Friesen, and his work colleague and friend, Tommy. And it's just such a pleasure to have him here. They're on a short time off. He's working out in Estevan and they got about 12 hours off, so they drove up from Estevan to come here and got a quick tour of the building today.

And it's been said lots in this House, Mr. Speaker, and it couldn't be more true how important family is in this job that we do. And you know, you go through raising your kids, and I've talked about them many times in the House. But I am so fortunate that my son and I, I consider him my best friend — awesome — and I'm able to talk to him about all the ups and downs of this job. And so it's my pleasure and honour to ask all members to please welcome Christopher and Tommy Massett to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Mr. T. McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I would like to introduce two individuals seated in the west gallery today. From the Twin Lakes District Planning Commission we have Bob Gilmour and Doug Ramage, Mr. Speaker. Today these individuals will be attending the morning session followed by a meeting with me and my officials to update us on the progress of the Nipawin Hospital STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service] helipad project.

Mr. Speaker, the air ambulance program in Saskatchewan, both fixed wing and the STARS rotary wing, are an integral part of the emergency medical response team in this province. Saskatchewan is continuing to enhance access to emergency medical services through the helicopter air medical program.

Mr. Speaker, we appreciate all the work that the Twin Lakes District Planning Commission has done to support a helipad within the community of Nipawin. I'm looking forward to meeting with these gentlemen and hearing more about their successes, Mr. Speaker. I ask all members to please join me in welcoming Bob and Doug to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to join in with the minister in welcoming Bob and Doug to their Assembly here today, thank them for all of the work that they are doing, and provide an opportunity to chat later on if they would like as well, Mr. Speaker. So I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Arm River.

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to welcome here and introduce some of the most important people in the province, seated right here in the east gallery.

Mr. Speaker, the future of Saskatchewan certainly is bright, and we have here 38 students from the Clive Draycott School in Bethune and their teachers Chelsea Phillips, Jessica Moffatt, Spencer Mack, and Grant Meyer as a testament to that brilliance, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm certainly looking forward to, after question period, sitting down and visiting with these folks. And I . . . And a lot of calls for ice cream. I even have something better than ice cream for them. It's a secret. It's a special, a special surprise for you here today, so I better think fast, Mr. Speaker. So I ask all members to help me to welcome this fine group of people to their legislature.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lumsden-Morse.

Mr. B. McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, it is indeed my privilege today to also introduce Megz Reynolds, seated in your gallery.

Megz has always been engaged with agriculture, first as a primary producer just north of Swift Current and Kyle, and presently she's employed as the director of SOP [sulphate of potash] sales for Saskatchewan Mining and Minerals.

And many of you are going to ask me, what is SOP? I'm going to tell you. This is a made-in-Saskatchewan initiative to bring together the plentiful supply of sodium sulphate at Chaplin with potash to make sulphate of potash, a fertilizer that they have plans to produce 50 000 tonnes annually to begin with in phase 1, and phase 2 to develop in Fox Valley. Phase 1 has the potential to double the workforce in Chaplin, Mr. Speaker. That's an additional 34 jobs here in rural Saskatchewan.

Welcome to the legislature, and we wish you every success in the planning and development of SOP, sulphate of potash. Thank you, Megz, for being here.

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce 23 grade 10 students from the great school of Greenall High, which is located in Balgonie. They would come from other communities other than just Balgonie, but that certainly is the regional high school in the area. They're accompanied by their teacher, Daniel Headrick. I look forward to meeting with them on the staircase and getting a couple of pictures — and yeah, I'm going to be in it, sorry — and then we'll get together in one of the caucus rooms and have a visit. So everybody please welcome Greenall to their Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Miigwech, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present the following petition calling for recognition of the Timber Bay residential school as a provincially run residential school, release of the school records, and a formal apology and compensation for survivors.

We, the undersigned residents of Canada, wish to bring to your attention the following: survivors of the Timber Bay residential school have been denied the Indian residential school settlements that other sites received on the basis that the school was run by the province of Saskatchewan rather than operated by the federal government; the province of Saskatchewan oversaw approximately 2,000 children attend school in Timber Bay, which operated between 1952 and 1994; Timber Bay Indian residential school is the only residential school in Saskatchewan with an open RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] investigation surrounding historical crimes.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to recognize the Timber Bay school as a provincially run residential school, release the school records to survivors, and offer the students of this school a formal apology and compensate the survivors.

The folks who signed this petition reside in Air Ronge and La Ronge. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to your attention the following: whereas the Trudeau Liberal-NDP [New Democratic Party] coalition carbon tax is one the main causes of affordability issues and inflation in the nation of Canada; that the federal Liberal-NDP government was politically motivated in issuing a carve-out for home heating oil; and that the Government of Saskatchewan's decision to not collect or remit the carbon tax on home heating in Saskatchewan has led to a drop in inflation; further, that despite the decision to not charge the carbon tax on home heating, Saskatchewan families continue to pay that tax out of pocket at pumps, grocery stores, and more.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to call upon the Government of Canada to immediately suspend the carbon tax across the nation of Canada and acknowledge its significant impact on affordability and inflation in Canada.

The below undersigned are residents of Kipling and Yorkton. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[10:15]

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling on the government to adequately fund education. We know, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan teachers are baffled by this government's disregard for students. At last year's budget, Mr. Speaker, STF President Samantha Becotte said, "Government either doesn't understand the issues or doesn't think they are important."

It's important to note that last year's failures come after nearly a decade of failures in funding that have failed to keep pace with inflation and enrolment, and that for years school divisions have described a system that is already cut to the bone. We need a government that clearly sees investing in our kids as an investment in our collective future.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to provide adequate, sustainable, and predictable operating funds for our 27 public and separate school divisions to ensure that schools, teachers, and other caring professionals are able to meet the needs of every student in Saskatchewan.

This is signed today by individuals in Regina and Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to be on feet again today presenting a petition calling on this government to fund in vitro fertilization treatments here in Saskatchewan. With the recent move by the Government of British Columbia, Saskatchewan is now one of two Canadian provinces that provides no support to those struggling with fertility, Mr. Speaker.

While this petition speaks of one cycle of IVF [in vitro fertilization] typically costing up to \$10,000, that number is a little bit out of date. The most recent figures recognize that this cost is now 15 to \$20,000. Of course often multiple cycles are required to conceive, if at all. A significant financial burden, Mr. Speaker.

This is not only the right thing to do, it is a good economic measure as well increasing Saskatchewan's fertility rate, with research by Fertility Matters Canada showing that for every baby conceived there is a \$300,000 net positive impact on the finances of that province.

I will read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately move to cover the financial burden of two rounds of IVF treatments for Saskatchewan people experiencing infertility.

The signatories of this petition today are from Simpson and Humbolt. I do so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm again on my feet to present a petition calling on the Sask Party government to open up the over-3,000 public housing units that are sitting empty, unused, vacant across the province. Mr. Speaker, there are 700 empty units in Regina. That's a vacancy rate of 23 per cent when we have a market vacancy rate of under 2 per cent. We have a

vacancy rate of 18 per cent amidst public housing in Saskatoon, where their market vacancy rate is something like 1.3 per cent.

This juxtaposition, Mr. Speaker, speaks to the abject failure of this government to invest in its public housing stock. And it comes with costs — increased expenditures on homelessness; increased expenditures on hotels, including hotels owned by Sask Party MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. It's a shame, Mr. Speaker.

The signatories of this petition are calling on this government to open up these vacant Sask Housing units by October 2024. The signatories reside in Regina and Kronau. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

University of Saskatchewan Huskies Women's Hockey Team Go for Gold

Ms. Mowat: — On February 13th I attended the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] Huskie Women of Influence Breakfast. We heard from student athletes about the mark that Saskatchewan women have left on the world of athletics, the importance of supporting women in sport, and the difference that scholarships can make in their careers. It was a special treat to sit with Kennedy Brown, captain of the U of S Huskies women's hockey team, and future pharmacist. We're all so proud of our female athletes here in Saskatchewan.

The Huskies will be playing at the 2024 U Sports Women's Hockey Championship games today, March 14th to the 17th, hosted at Merlis Belsher Place in Saskatoon, and tickets are still available. This will be the first time the U of S has hosted this event and the gold medal game is at 6 p.m. on Sunday.

I want to thank the volunteers, staff, coaches, and players who have helped to make this tournament a great success. Let's all cheer on the Huskies as they go for gold this weekend. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Musician and Songwriter Finds Success in His Struggles

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Duff Kelly, originally from the Rutland area, has been making a name for himself by using his life experiences, including his struggles with mental health, as an inspiration.

Mr. Speaker, Duff explains that music has always played an important role in his life. He was taught to play guitar by his parents and was part of his family band. Duff was a rebellious teen and turned away from his guitar and his family. Duff later found his passion and became a crop-duster pilot.

In 2007 everything changed for Duff when he hit a power line with his aircraft. Mr. Speaker, Duff suffered a brain injury and many bodily injuries. Duff required 20 reconstructive surgeries and brain rehabilitation over a five-year period. Unfortunately,

Duff also became addicted to pain medication and was severely depressed.

Mr. Speaker, about a year after the crash, Duff picked up his guitar again. Duff needed to relearn the guitar to play left-handed due to his injuries. Since that time, Mr. Speaker, Duff has made amends with his parents, and he writes and performs songs about his struggles. Duff indicated that he is thankful and blessed to be alive.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this Assembly join me in celebrating Duff's songwriting and performing successes, and wishing him all the best as he continues to head through his music. Thank you.

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

People Bridge Advocacy Group Hosts Champion For Change Awards

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In January I was privileged to attend the inaugural Champion for Change Awards Gala in Saskatoon, hosted by the People Bridge Advocacy group. This is a charitable organization deeply committed to supporting BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, people of colour] individuals, equity-seeking communities, and newcomers. It focuses on capacity building, fostering cultural connections, and advancing the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.

Founder and Executive Director Senos Timon's vision for justice and equity was both inspiring and a clear call for action. The People Bridge's mission to bridge cultural divides and empower grassroots leaders highlights the strength found in unity. Her efforts in educating the public about intercultural community building are commendable, especially against the current backdrop of rising divisiveness and hate-motivated crimes in our province and beyond.

The gala emphasized the urgent need for racial and cultural reconciliation, and perhaps the best part of the evening was the awards presentation. Seeing the reactions of all of these grassroots leaders from cultural communities across Saskatoon, who are so rarely recognized for their leadership, to be celebrated for all they do was truly inspiring. This event was not just a celebration, but a rallying cry for all of us to commit to building a more inclusive and equitable province for all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Vote for Wolseley in Hockeyville Competition

Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure and honour that I announce that my hometown of Wolseley in the Moosomin constituency has been selected as one of the top four finalists in the prestigious Kraft Hockeyville Canada competition.

This recognition is a testament to the passion, dedication, and the spirit that permeates every corner of our community. For generations hockey has been more than a just a sport here; it's been a way of life ingrained in our culture and woven into the

fabric of our town's identity. From early-morning practices at a frosty rink to the roar of the crowd echoing through our arena, hockey has brought us together, fostering camaraderie and unity like nothing else. But it's not just about the game itself. It's about the values it instills: teamwork, perseverance, and sportsmanship. As one of the top four finalists, we have the opportunity to showcase what makes Wolseley and Saskatchewan truly special to the entire nation.

The Kraft Hockeyville Canada winner will receive \$250,000, and for Wolseley this will go a long way in purchasing the much needed replacement for its ice plant. The winner will also host a pre-season NHL [National Hockey League] game.

Wolseley is the smallest community in the Kraft Hockeyville Canada competition, and we will need help from everyone in Saskatchewan. Votes can be cast at krafthockeyville.ca beginning on March 29th at 7 a.m. until the voting closes on March 30th at 3 p.m. The winner will be announced live on *Hockey Night in Canada* on March 30th. Vote early and vote often. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Rural and Remote Recruitment Incentive Shows Results

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government started the rural and remote incentive program in 2023, and we are still offering a one-time rural and remote recruitment incentive of up to \$50,000 to health care workers in high-priority positions in rural Saskatchewan locations.

The incentive is paid over three years for a matching return and service agreement for new employees of the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] filling a permanent full-time position in one of the high-priority classifications. Mr. Speaker, these recruitment incentives have given us the opportunity to hire more full-time registered nurses, psychiatric nurses, nurse practitioners, lab and X-ray techs, licensed practical nurses, medical laboratory technologists, medical radiation technologists, continuing care aides, and medical lab assistants. The \$60 million incentive is giving new grads more opportunity to stay right here in Saskatchewan.

The Canora-Pelly constituency alone has seen definite progress and is allowed to hire more nurses and X-ray labs in Kamsack, four new grad nurses last year in Canora, and new nurses in Preeceville. This has directly helped us open more beds in our constituency and has allowed us to stay open more for our patients in our area.

Mr. Speaker, this program has allowed our government to recruit numerous nurses into rural Saskatchewan within our community to help recruit, train, and retain . . .

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

Saskatchewan Exports Record Amount of Agri-Foods

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know the opposition members aren't going to want to hear it, but our Saskatchewan ag producers are continuing to export record

numbers of sustainable products to market across the globe.

For the fourth year in a row, Saskatchewan has posted record agri-food exports, with shipments totalling over \$20 billion in 2023. Mr. Speaker, despite the Trudeau-NDP coalition's best efforts to kneecap our farmers and producers, these producers continue to ship their products to market and feed the world, and our global trade offices have a large part to play in this growth. Our top international market destinations were the United States, China, Japan, Mexico, and Algeria. Most of these destinations have a Saskatchewan trade office established within their jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, our ag exports have increased by more than 52.1 per cent since 2013. The leading export commodities for 2023 were non-durum wheat, canola seed, canola oil, durum, lentils, and canola meal. Despite a hostile federal government, a global pandemic, and a volatile international market, Saskatchewan producers continue to see high demand for their products. And that means more jobs, opportunities, and growth right here at home.

Mr. Speaker, this government will always support our exporters and ag producers. And while the opposition plot to dismantle and crash our economy, we're going to keep telling Saskatchewan's story on the world stage. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Opposition Position on Carbon Tax

Ms. C. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday at the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention, the Leader of the Opposition said the way to earn trust is to say the same thing in every room. Well if that's the case, Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder no one trusts the NDP, especially on the carbon tax.

In the SARM convention room, the Leader of the Opposition said the NDP is opposed to the carbon tax. But that's not what she and her members have said in a lot of other rooms. The Leader of the Opposition said no in this Assembly to denouncing the federal carbon tax.

And we all know several members of the opposition have certainly not said the same thing in every room. The member from Nutana said the need for a carbon tax is, and I quote, "not up for debate any longer." And the member for Regina Walsh Acres said, and I quote, "Why shouldn't consumers actually pay the price of carbon for producing food?" The member for Regina Walsh Acres went on to say, and I quote, "Spoiler: I'm in favour of the carbon tax."

Mr. Speaker, the NDP leader told SARM delegates she has a test for earning their trust, and then she immediately failed that test. SARM delegates and Saskatchewan people know which leader and which party has always been consistent in opposition to the carbon tax in every room, and it's not the NDP.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Fuel Tax and Highway Maintenance

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, this tired and out-of-touch government needs new talking points. Mr. Speaker, they are not listening to Saskatchewan people.

[10:30]

Cost of living is the number one issue for people in this province, but the Sask Party is doing nothing to help them. It's time to give people a break at the pumps. Why won't the Premier scrap the fuel tax for six months to give Saskatchewan families a break?

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are providing relief for people in this province by removing the carbon tax from home heating bills not only to save the average household about \$400 a year, Mr. Speaker, but more importantly to provide fairness to Saskatchewan residents that have not been afforded to them by the Prime Minister of this country, propped up by the NDP in Ottawa. Mr. Speaker, so that is one of the measures that we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that, in terms of reducing the fuel tax, what the public knows is every single dollar under this government — unlike under the NDP, when it took more in fuel tax than we spent on highways — every single dollar is spent on the highways budget.

We don't want to see an NDP do what they did in the past: to axe the budget when it came to highways, Mr. Speaker. Too many people in this province remember that the NDP stands for no darn pavement.

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

Transparency and Health Care Staffing

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people deserve so much better than they're getting from this tired and out-of-touch government.

When the Sask Party came into office, they promised to be the most transparent and accountable government in Saskatchewan history, but they've broken that promise time and time again.

Here's the most recent example. The Ministry of Health publishes a report every year called the medical services branch statistical report. This shows how many doctors and specialists are working in Saskatchewan. Usually it's posted online in December, but the Sask Party didn't post it this year. So we FOI'd [freedom of information] it. Their response? They denied it because the report is apparently going to be published on May 31st.

Why is the Sask Party burying this report until after session is over?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate

the opportunity to talk about this government's record when it comes to health care and specifically to doctors in this province, Mr. Speaker.

More than a thousand . . . A thousand more physicians are now practising in Saskatchewan since 2007, Mr. Speaker. A 62 per cent increase overall in physicians, 100 per cent increase in pediatricians, 79 per cent increase in specialists, more general practitioners, more psychiatrists, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the past 28 months here in Saskatchewan, 107 family physicians and 155 specialists have been recruited to Saskatchewan for a total of 262 physicians, far outpacing the record of the members opposite during their time in government, where we lost doctors, we lost nurses, we closed hospitals, we closed long-term care beds. That's something that the people of this province never want to go back to, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, if that were true, why not release the report today? This is information that people are entitled to, Mr. Speaker. The minister is burying the report, plain and simple.

Saskatchewan people deserve to know how many doctors have been lost under this Sask Party's watch. We have a right to that information. And it tells us everything we need to know about the Sask Party government that they're using these loopholes in FOI law to bury this report until after session is over.

Will the minister make this report public today? Yes or no?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my previous answer, in terms of the number of record investments that we've made into health recruitment and retention in this province — significant investments — and by the way, Mr. Speaker, we're only able to do that as a result of a strong and growing and vibrant economy in this province so that we can make these investments, continue to build up our health care system.

As I talked about a significant number of new doctors that are working in this province, and we'll continue to do that. We very much appreciate the work that we have with the Saskatchewan Medical Association, recently signing a new contract with our family physicians in this province that, as they have said, will go a long ways towards recruiting and retaining doctors, and they are very grateful for the partnership that they have with us as a government, Mr. Speaker.

And I would conclude by saying it's also important for people to know the record of the members opposite, which is that the NDP had the worst doctor and nurse recruitment and retention record in this province — lost 450 nurses, Mr. Speaker, lost 176 doctors between 2001 and 2006.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Well I guess that's a no, Mr. Speaker. Mr.

Speaker, the minister is pulling out all the stops to keep Saskatchewan people in the dark about the state of our health care system. With each passing day, this tired and out-of-touch government becomes more and more allergic to transparency. This is basic information about the state of our health care system, and it's not acceptable for the Sask Party to keep it under wraps until after session is over, or maybe until after a spring election, Mr. Speaker.

So what changed? How did the Sask Party go from being the most open and accountable government in history to stonewalling basic requests for information?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking of transparency, I think the people of the province would like to know what the members opposite would do. What is their plan? What is their platform for health care, Mr. Speaker?

Actually well we did, we have heard some of their platform. I think in the last election, their platform, they had a plan to hire I think it was 450 nurses over four years. That was the lofty goal that the members opposite set, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, since December of 2022 we have been able to hire over 1,000 new nursing graduates from Saskatchewan, from other Canadian provinces. In addition to that, hundreds of more nurses coming from the Philippines who are working either in our facilities right now or they're working through the pathway to bridging, Mr. Speaker, to be working in our communities.

We heard in members' statements earlier some of the benefits of these successes, how it's helping to improve health care right across this province even though the members opposite don't like to hear the facts, Mr. Speaker.

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

Accountability and Government Spending

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, this tired and out-of-touch government keeps keeping Saskatchewan people in the dark and failing them. That applies to health care and that applies to their mismanagement of our public finances.

The third quarter financial report used to be released in February or early March in advance of the budget, but the Sask Party scrapped that a few years ago, a basic accountability measure. When they refused to release it this year, we FOI'd it. Like the medical report, the Sask Party denied our request because it will be published sometime into the future. It's not acceptable and it's not fair to Saskatchewan people.

Why won't the Finance minister come clean with Saskatchewan people as to the true state of our finances and release the third quarter financial report?

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm

pleased to take that on behalf of the government. The member opposite will know that this is a practice that has been in place for a number of years now. It will be released as a part of the budget, Mr. Speaker.

We will provide that full transparency in terms of not only the third quarter, but just within a couple of sleeps, Mr. Speaker, that member and all members and the public will see a budget delivered by this Finance minister that will be good for this province, that will see investments in education, in health, and in our communities — everything that the people of this province expect and deserve.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party used to release the third quarter financial report. That's a fact. Here's from the news release from March 2nd, 2018: "Deficit lower at third quarter." From the news release from February 29th, 2016: "Third quarter revenues are down."

When the minister says and the Finance minister says that burying the third quarter financial report is a long-standing practice of that government, that's demonstrably inconsistent with the facts. It's nonsense, Mr. Speaker.

Why is the Sask Party relying on loopholes in the law to get around providing basic accountability to Saskatchewan people? Why won't they come clean on the true state of our finances?

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's simply not the case. We do provide that accountability and transparency for the people of the province. We will be providing that next week when the Finance minister delivers a budget, Mr. Speaker, a budget that is going to ensure that we have a strong economy and a bright future for all residents in this province.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it makes you wonder what are they hiding over there. Well let's just look at what was said in this room on budget day last year, where the finances have gone from budget day last year.

At budget time they said we had a billion-dollar surplus, Mr. Speaker. Then the mid-year report came out and they said, no, they blew it; it was a quarter-billion-dollar deficit. But just wait. Then we see just a couple weeks ago \$757 million of additional spending with no accountability and no report.

It certainly looks like we've gone from a billion-dollar surplus to a billion-dollar deficit — a \$2 billion miss on the budget, a swing as a result of the mismanagement of those financial gurus over there, Mr. Speaker.

Why won't the Sask Party release the third quarter financial report? Or at least why won't they tell us just how big is the deficit this fiscal year?

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd be interested to know from that member opposite what he wouldn't have provided support for. Would he have not provided support for the new contract that we have with our doctors? Would he have not provided support for the relocatable classrooms, Mr. Speaker, such as in my community and other communities across this province? Would he have not provided support for our agricultural producers that have had a difficult last couple of years?

Mr. Speaker, we have a strong economy and that is going to continue. And it's going to continue because of the work that's being done by this government and by the people of this province and most especially by this Finance minister.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, that government has balanced one budget in the last nine years. They've tripled the debt and they spent untold billions on wasted and mismanaged projects, Mr. Speaker.

Just look at IT [information technology] projects that have gone off the rails — hundreds of millions of dollars — that don't even work. Let's look at spending a hundred million dollars, and counting, on travel nurses. Let's look at spending 10 times more the cost to send Saskatchewan women to a donor in Calgary to receive a mammogram. Let's look at the GTH [Global Transportation Hub]. Let's look at the bypass. Let's look at the revenue agency. Let's look at their redundant and more costly marshals services. Mr. Speaker, let's look at all the ways this government wastes your hard-earned dollars.

Mr. Speaker, they missed their budget by \$2 billion. How do Saskatchewan people have any faith in what they say next week?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite's question, and the minister asked him the question as well: which of the things would he cut? Which of those things would he have not done? Would he have not done the agreement for the doctors, the agreement for the medical association?

And we heard him again, Mr. Speaker, again the members opposite running down the health care system, running down our health care teams and . . . He says he has a longer list. We're looking forward to that list of all the things they want to cancel, Mr. Speaker.

But again we've heard them talk down the initiative to give women the option to have breast cancer diagnostics done in Calgary as a short-term measure — something that was brought to us by the health care professionals here in the city of Regina that said, we can really use this as a temporary measure while we continue to do things like invest in a new breast health centre like we announced last week, Mr. Speaker, and hiring of more radiologists, hiring of more staff, building up on those services for people of Saskatchewan right across this province that they

deserve and not something that the NDP would cut.

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

Contract Negotiations with Teachers

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, this tired and out-of-touch government has shown through their actions that they'll use every loophole they can to avoid being held to account. And that's exactly why Saskatchewan people have no faith in this so-called funding agreement this minister put out last week. It has a mile-wide loophole in the fine print, where all the promises are "subject to appropriation." That's government talk for subject to whatever the Sask Party puts in the budget every year once the election is done and dusted, just like they did in 2016.

Why won't the minister sign a real contract with teachers that actually addresses class size and complexity?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — Mr. Speaker, I won't take much time to try and explain the budget process to that member opposite. I think the Minister of Finance could do a much better job of that than myself. But I think the member opposite needs to understand every budget is subject to appropriation. That's what we do: we come to this House; we debate it; we debate the budget bills; we go through estimates. Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what the budget process is each and every single year.

Mr. Speaker, it's very odd, from that member opposite and the leader opposite, to talk about how they want to support school boards, yet they have come out with a position that's opposite to the 27 school boards have expressed. The 27 school boards in our province, they don't want to see class size and complexity in a provincial-wide agreement. We agree, Mr. Speaker, and we have a multi-year funding agreement to set classroom supports funding at a minimum level over the next four years, endorsed and signed by all 27 school divisions. That's how we're working with school boards around the province.

[10:45]

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, the truth is that this impasse has gone on for far too long because of this minister's smug and arrogant approach and his inability to bargain in good faith. Class size and complexity are the top issues facing classrooms today, and the minister should get a deal done that addresses these problems that hold Saskatchewan students back.

If this tired and out-of-touch government won't negotiate on class size and complexity, will the minister send just those issues to binding arbitration?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. This government — and we've been clear on this right since the beginning — we are not going to sign an agreement that puts one federation's

interests above the interests of students and families and teachers across the province, Mr. Speaker.

We're also not going to sign an agreement that doesn't recognize the diverse needs in communities all across the province, Mr. Speaker. That is not what we are going to do. When it comes to binding arbitration, how do we go to binding arbitration when the teachers' federation has only been at the bargaining table for half an hour over the last five months? We need to have a substantial discussion about the issues that we've brought forward. We want to have that discussion, Mr. Speaker. We've been inviting the STF leadership back to the bargaining table. It's time for them to stop making excuses and be at the table.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, teachers have made it clear that there has to be a real commitment in writing on class size and complexity, and the minister has made it clear he's not interested in that. Even though he should be if he's working the best interests of Saskatchewan students. It's hard to see any path forward under this Sask Party status quo.

We need to get a deal done that addresses class size and complexity to put this to bed. So here's an idea: why won't that minister get out of the way and send this issue to arbitration so there can finally be a resolution?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been very clear this week. I've been very clear in previous instances that there is no reason to go to binding arbitration. The fact that we've only had half an hour at the bargaining table with the STF leadership over the last five months, that's not acceptable, Mr. Speaker.

And quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, leadership owes it to their members to be at the bargaining table working to try and find a deal that's in the best interests of their members as well as students and families across the province. It's time for them to be back at the table so we can work on that deal. Thank you.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, this minister owes the people, the students, and the teachers of Saskatchewan an explanation why he's going to get in the way of getting a deal done. Why won't he today commit to sending these issues of class size and composition to arbitration and then get back to the table with teachers on all the other outstanding issues and negotiate a fair deal for Saskatchewan teachers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've outlined previously, but I'll outline again for that member opposite, all the several items that government has moved on in our revised offer, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a salary deal that . . . It's not 23.4 per cent over four

years, but it is a salary offer that has in account for cost-of-living increases; an offer so that the STF can manage their own dental plan; wording around violence in the workplace that we believe is a very important step forward in that regard. That's in addition to again, Mr. Speaker, to the announcement that we will have the largest ever increase to school operating funding in this province.

What we are not going to do as government, Mr. Speaker, is sign an agreement that puts one union's interests over the interests of students and families and that does not recognize the diverse needs in communities all around the province. Government is not going to do that, Mr. Speaker. It's time for the STF to come back to the table. Thank you.

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

Government's Energy Policies

Ms. Wilson: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government stands in this Assembly, puffs out their chest, pats themselves on the back for helping Alberta and Manitoba with energy in January, at the same time ignoring that the coal plant in Estevan that provided this energy is actively being shut down by this government. They have committed to the net zero by 2050 agenda with Justin Trudeau and are destroying the economy in southern Saskatchewan.

They are choosing to shut down clean coal in favour of more wind and solar farms, farms that have been proven to be abject failures in Germany, France, the UK [United Kingdom], Italy, Japan, Taiwan, California, and even Alberta, to list a few.

When will all this Sask Party government be open to the public about their energy plan? When will they come clean about the impact of their net zero agenda?

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I certainly am pleased to be able to answer this question.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would know or should recall that she was a member of this caucus when the pan-Canadian climate plan was announced by the federal government and signed by every single province except for one, and that was this province. So no, we disagree vehemently with the federal government, with their plan, when it comes to the clean electricity regulations.

We know that we're going to continue to produce electrical generation that is emitting, Mr. Speaker, as well as have non-emitting sources. But in the case of emitting sources, a 377-megawatt natural gas power plant will be opening later this summer. As well we have plans for another 377-megawatt natural gas plant at the Aspen site to be opened by 2027, Mr. Speaker.

As well we're going to continue to run our other assets, including Boundary dam 3, where we have demonstrated the technology that the world continues to come to see in Estevan, Mr. Speaker, and is a solution for those jurisdictions that will continue to . . .

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

Ms. Wilson: — Mr. Speaker, moments ago, at the SARM convention, where RMs [rural municipality] of this province voted overwhelmingly by 95 per cent to recognize that CO₂ is not a pollutant and that Saskatchewan will remove itself from any national or international agreements that reference net zero.

Will this government find its feet today and stand with people of this province and admit that CO₂ is not a pollutant and scrap their net zero by 2050 agreement with Justin Trudeau?

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, again I'll say that we have disagreed with the clean electricity regulations that have been put in place by the federal government. We'll continue to oppose those, Mr. Speaker.

As I indicated, we have over 700 megawatts of emitting — fossil fuel, carbon dioxide-emitting — power plants that are a part of the generation plan for the next number of years, that will take us well beyond the next number of decades, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to have our investments in Boundary dam 3, Mr. Speaker. That will continue to be a part of the fleet that we will use. And we continue to encourage the world to come to Estevan to see what we are doing and this groundbreaking technology.

But I would say to the member opposite: nuclear generation is non-emitting. Is she opposed to nuclear generation?

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

Ms. Wilson: — Mr. Speaker, I ask again: will this government stand with the people today and recognize that CO₂ is not a pollutant and scrap their net zero by 2050 agenda?

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I'll just indicate what I have in the past. We have a plan going forward that is made in Saskatchewan. We are opposing the clean electricity regulations. We think that they are — like other plans implemented by the Liberals, supported by the NDP — not good for this province, Mr. Speaker.

And so we will continue to build natural gas plants. We'll continue to operate our other generating assets, including those that do produce carbon dioxide, Mr. Speaker. We will have a wide range of assets that we'll be able to use going forward to ensure that people can heat their homes in the wintertime, so we don't come into a situation like they had in Alberta, where we were happy to help out, Mr. Speaker.

But again, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member opposite . . . And I'm glad to see that she stuck around in question period long enough to hear my answers this time, Mr. Speaker. Is the member opposite opposed to nuclear power because it does not emit

carbon dioxide. Is she opposed to nuclear power?

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

Fuel Tax and Highway Maintenance

Ms. Wilson: — Mr. Speaker, I've been hammering the Sask Party government for months in the legislature about axing their 15-cents-a-litre tax on fuel, yet they refuse to listen and they refuse to act. They will not give the hard-working Saskatchewan people the same tax cuts that our neighbours have given their citizens. This is just more wreck and neglect by the Sask Party government. They are killing our competitive advantage while taxing our citizens so they can grow the size of their government, Mr. Speaker.

As we keep saying, Saskatchewan doesn't have a money problem; it has a management problem. When will the Sask Party management swallow their pride and finally axe their tax on fuel?

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, last week the Heavy Construction Association sent a letter disputing the calls for pausing of provincial fuel tax. They said that the suspension would be a short-term solution that will create long-term problems. Industry members' operations would be forced to shut down and move out of the province, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP leader and that leader have not only failed to come up with a single policy of their own. The policies that both of them champion would hurt this province, just like the same old NDP, Mr. Speaker. That party and the NDP would leave this province with less businesses, less jobs, less people, but more potholes.

The Speaker: — I would like to caution the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation is not to make reference to a member's presence or absence in your last answer.

And I would like to ask the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre . . . You said, tell the truth, Jeremy. I would like you to withdraw and apologize that comment.

Ms. Conway: — I withdraw and apologize.

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

Mr. Fiaz: — I request leave to make an introduction, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Leave has been requested to make an introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sitting in your gallery, Tarsem Singh Gill, Mr. Speaker. He's a song

producer under the name of Haani Records. He also have his YouTube channel, and some of the views are 100 million plus, Mr. Speaker. I ask all the members of this Assembly to welcome Mr. Gill in his Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Burki: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our Regina member opposite, Mr. Gill, he's a good contribution in the community, a good, strong leader. And we are welcoming him to our Legislative Assembly over here. Join me in welcoming to his Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Gill.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Ms. Conway: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Please state your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Ms. Conway: — During a member's statement, the member from Lloydminster indicated, and I quote, that "it's no wonder no one trusts the NDP." Mr. Speaker, I'd ask you to review the record and come back with a ruling that that language is unparliamentary.

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

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was listening very carefully and I did not hear that, so if you wish to review the record.

The Speaker: — We will review the record. But generally if you want to . . . You know the rules. You're not to impugn the reputation or the trustworthiness of members. We're supposed to be all hon. members. If you want to go down that path, well we can have lots of points of orders and rulings. So we will check into that. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order question no. 2.

The Speaker: — Question 2 has been ordered.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Government Support for Saskatchewan Municipalities

Mr. Kaeding: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to be on my feet and bring forward this important motion. It's a motion

that will identify the value that this Sask Party government places on our municipalities. It will discuss the levels of investment that we've made in helping our municipalities grow to support families that will start a business, raise a family, and retire here in this province. It will also be a motion that will remind people of the dark days of decline and what it looked like under the NDP, and why we never want to go back to those days.

Mr. Speaker, I am darn proud of this province, of its people, and of its resilience. This province has survived drought, grasshopper infestations, the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, and the NDP government.

[11:00]

None of them have been terribly palatable, but some have had more long-lasting effects than others. We have grown from a wee province that members who are on the side opposite could not believe that it could grow its population even at the national average of 1 per cent per year, to what is now that national and global powerhouse that it is today, with over 1.2 million people calling this province home.

Saskatchewan has faced many challenges, but it did so with a collectively positive attitude and a bold vision for the future that is worthy of the people and the resources of this amazing place. Saskatchewan truly has made its mark, and it's contributing significantly to this Confederation, and we have a premier who is fighting daily to ensure that the federation recognizes that.

This significant turnaround came in the year 2007 when the political landscape changed in this province, when the attitude changed from fear and resignation that we will never be more than what we are. For decades this province was locked in a Depression-era mentality that Saskatchewan really wouldn't and couldn't grow. That changed when a forward-thinking government was voted in by a populace that was tired — tired of feeling discouraged and beaten down. Today there's an attitude of hope and opportunity, and encouragement has become the prevailing attitude where hope beat fear, except unfortunately by the NDP members.

Now I do see the opposition rolling their eyes and expressing disbelief that, you know, their little echo chamber is continuing to remind them that it can't possibly be that good, Mr. Deputy Speaker, their belief, belief that there really is no good reason why people should feel good about being in this province.

You know those extra 300,000 people that came here in the last 15 years? They can't possibly be right. What's their reason for being here? \$17.1 billion in capital investment in Saskatchewan last year? I don't know; that must be a mirage. Those new potash mines, those canola crush plants, manufacturing facilities, they all must be figments of our imagination, Mr. Deputy Speaker. \$2.4 billion in building permits in 2023 can't be possible. Those new houses in subdivisions in our municipalities cannot possibly be correct, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well unfortunately just because their talking points probably just don't have that in them.

Unemployment — third best in the country. And as of this morning my area of Yorkton-Melville has over 1,100 jobs currently listed on the SaskJobs website. There are 15,375 jobs listed on the SaskJobs website. But wait, there's more.

Employment for off-reserve Indigenous populations has increased an astounding 26,200 since 2007.

And the NDP had asked, why are they staying? Because we're worst in the country for, well fill in the blanks, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, the NDP unfortunately do have a lot of disputable facts that they like to throw out.

Anyway, enough of that doom and gloom, you know. I believe we've determined that, you know, in *Winnie-the-Pooh*, Eeyore had an NDP membership. So what's his favourite line? "I was so upset I forgot to be happy."

Don't get me wrong. You know, with growth comes issues. We need more care homes. Got that covered; we built 15 new ones. We need more schools. Got that covered; we built 60 more. We need improved hospitals. Got that covered, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Since November 2007 the Government of Saskatchewan has invested over \$2.4 billion into facilities and equipment to improve the delivery of health care across this province. But those investments can only be done when we have a strong economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2007 when this Sask Party came to government, it recognized the need to support municipalities with sustainable, dependable, and unconditional funding that municipalities could count on year over year. Since 2007 this government has invested over \$4 billion into our municipal sector through municipal revenue sharing. This is stable, consistent funding that allows communities to reliably plan ahead. It's also the envy of municipalities across the country. It is predictable in that it's a percentage of the total PST [provincial sales tax] collected in the province two years previous. The relationship to PST collected allows municipalities to share in the bounty when provincial sales are increasing.

2023, that was a record-breaking year for municipal revenue sharing. \$298 million was shared with our urban and rural municipalities and northern communities. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I personally am very proud of the fact when I had the opportunity to serve as Government Relations minister, I brought in the targeted sector support program. The targeted sector support initiative, it's a cost-shared grant program that uses a portion of municipal revenue sharing — about \$1.5 million per fiscal — to support projects that strengthen municipalities' core operational capabilities to increase regional co-operation. These projects lead to more efficient and effective municipal service delivery and enhance governance and administrative capacity in the province, an initiative that supports the sharing and caring and co-operative attitude of this province and its people.

In the NDP's time in government in the '90s, the NDP went to the municipalities and they asked them to take a hit on revenue sharing. And the municipalities obliged. When the financial picture improved though, the money for municipalities unfortunately did not. And rather than come up with a system that worked, the NDP opted for the status quo, leaving municipalities in the dark under the provincial budget that was handed down.

Then at the end of their time in government, the NDP did tinker with the system, but you know what it ended up with? It ended up with lower revenues for every municipality other than Regina and Saskatoon, and rural Saskatchewan has not forgotten that

decision. Past performance, they say, is an indicator of future results. We have 300,000 new people to remind of that principle. We need to remind them that we cannot go back to the dark days of the NDP.

Since 2018 our government has committed over 584 million in provincial funding to 443 municipal capital projects, resulting in over \$1.77 billion directly invested into Saskatchewan communities. This is initiated through the Investing in Canada fund but also included 900 million in federal funding in addition to provincial and municipal funding.

Projects under this program are going to improve community health and safety, economic growth and sustainability, environmental protection, and quality of life through investments in northern, rural, and remote roads and airports; municipal and regional infrastructure; greenhouse gas mitigation; and culture and recreation facilities.

Just in the last year commitments were made to fund over 44.5 million in the city of Martensville for their community recreation facility, 4 million for the Lac La Ronge landfill decommission, 5 million to the town of Assiniboia for their rec complex, 74 million to the Buffalo Pound water treatment project, and 20 million for the Prince Albert aquatic and arena rec centre, and over 11 million to the city of Humboldt wastewater treatment system upgrade — all serious investments that are going to improve to help to continue to build a stronger Saskatchewan that is home to a strong economy, strong community, and strong families.

Mr. Speaker, this takes us a long way from the dark days of the NDP crashing the economy and not believing in the province, its communities, and its people.

Mr. Speaker, fun fact: 2007, when the NDP highways policy . . . What did we hear today? The no darn pavement policy. When they were converting asphalt back to gravel, Dwain Lingenfelter — and I know folks opposite they hate it, they hate it when we really bring up the name Mr. Lingenfelter — but he said, and I quote, I quote, "I don't see anything wrong with taxpayers fixing their own roads. This is what community building is all about."

Community building — taking a bucket of gravel and going out to fill your road, to fill a pothole. That's their definition of community building, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Boy I'm glad we've moved on from those dark days, Mr. Speaker, because honestly that's a little pathetic.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has significantly reduced the education property tax on our property owners. Since our time in government we've reduced that cumulative education property tax burden by approximately \$3.05 billion. It's been shrinking steadily to the point now where education is funded 39 per cent from EPT [education property tax] and 61 per cent from government. Under the old and tired NDP our residents paid the most education property tax in the nation.

Our NDP neighbours next door — and I have them right beside me — in the short three months that they've been in power, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they've given school divisions the ability to raise their EPT. You know what this . . . you know what happened? Well in some Manitoba municipal districts they're

increasing their education property tax by 17 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, talking about education, let's briefly discuss the MOU [memorandum of understanding] being signed by this government and the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. It's going to provide a minimum 356.6 million per year for four years in the classroom supports for students and their teachers as well as additional investments in the youth mental health resources, an increased investment of 180 million into school operational funding. This will mark the largest, the largest increase in Saskatchewan's history towards operational funding for school divisions, nearly 9 per cent over the previous year for a total of \$2.2 billion put into the 2024-25 education budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this agreement provides a long-term funding for classroom supports to focus on addressing issues that are important to all of us like classroom size and complexity. Our government continues to believe in local-level solutions involving teachers, staff, students, parents, and families to achieve healthy outcomes, promoting our kids' success in life, their education, and future careers.

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as with the multi-year funding agreement that we signed with the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] and their 27 school divisions, it's also ensuring that classroom support funding stays firm for the next four years.

Lastly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to touch on the area of health care. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have no doubt issues in health care, especially since COVID resulted in a carry-over of issues in our surgical wards and hospitals. But we are catching up. We're catching up with a record amount of surgeries performed just in the last few months.

We've made a huge investment in recruitment, retention, and training of future health care professionals. We've invested in urgent care centres in our two largest centres that are going to take the pressure off of our ERs [emergency room] in our major hospitals.

We've committed to the renovation and expansion of the P.A. [Prince Albert] Vic Hospital, and just earlier this week announced the Regina breast health centre that will enhance and streamline the care Saskatchewan women are going to receive. And on Tuesday we made a significant announcement supporting and increasing the role that nurse practitioners will play in delivering health care across the province.

However we do hear from the NDP opposition constant criticism of health care providers and delivery of health care in the province. I'm afraid until the old Plains hospital building disappears from the Regina city horizon, the NDP's legacy of health care in this province is represented in the stories of that building and will be a constant reminder to the residents of the province how the NDP failed this province in their health care . . . [inaudible].

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am afraid that this tired and out-of-touch NDP party just don't have policy and ideas of their own. They want to change their narrative around the fact that they just don't have a plan. So to hide, they try to sow the seeds of fear with the

public. Luckily, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are far, far smarter than the opposition gives them credit for, and recent polling indicates that with our Premier's popularity.

The people of Saskatchewan also know that fear is not a policy. They know that it's not an idea. They know, for what it really is is a sad, last-ditch attempt to disguise the fact that, left to their own devices, the members across the aisle have absolutely zero to offer the people of Saskatchewan. Zero ideas, zero platform, zero policies, zero plans.

Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to move the following motion:

That this Assembly supports the Government of Saskatchewan's support for municipalities through programs and investments like the municipal revenue-sharing program, the Investing in Canada Infrastructure fund, and building new schools and health care facilities; and further,

That this Assembly denounces the opposition NDP for their lack of support for rural municipalities, including their history of shuttering health care facilities and abandoning taxpayers to maintain their own infrastructure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like the great people of this province to remember a quote from one of our party's leaders. "Remember the only day better than today in Saskatchewan is tomorrow in Saskatchewan." Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The motion moved by the member from Melville-Saltcoats is:

That this Assembly supports the Government of Saskatchewan's support for municipalities through programs and investments like the municipal revenue-sharing program, the Investing in Canada Infrastructure fund, and building new schools and health care facilities; and further,

That this Assembly denounces the opposition NDP for their lack of support for rural municipalities, including their history of shutting health care facilities and abandoning taxpayers to maintain their own infrastructure.

Is the Chamber ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

[11:15]

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Honoured to be rising to enter into debate today on this topic. And I'll say that, you know, the member from Melville-Saltcoats and I, we do have a few things in common. You know, we know that Saskatchewan people are smart. I think there's no doubt about that.

And Saskatchewan people . . . He was talking a little bit about polling. Saskatchewan people were also polled recently on what their top issues are, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they said loud and clear that affordability and health care were their top issues and that the overwhelming majority believed that this government,

this Premier is doing a bad job on both of those fronts, Mr. Speaker. So absolutely we'll listen to the people of this province and what their priorities are.

There's a whole bunch in this motion, Mr. Speaker, that I could choose to talk about. And I'll spend most of my time talking about rural health care, which is probably no surprise given my role as Health critic, but I do want to touch on infrastructure and economy first as well, Mr. Speaker.

Of course we know . . . And members are already having a great time with their heckling, Mr. Speaker, and I do look forward to having the opportunity to address some of these points. Mr. Speaker, when we talk about infrastructure, of course we know infrastructure is essential to the operation of our province. We have to have adequate funding to maintain all of our public buildings, our social housing units, highways, schools, hospitals. This is absolutely essential. We know that investing in our public services is critical and keeping these buildings operational and highways operational is critical to our province. We have a population that's spread throughout the province and this is one of the big challenges for government.

We've also called for a northern road strategy and called on the government to work with northern leaders and First Nations to fix access to northern roads. My colleague from Cumberland has stood up in Athabasca voicing these issues on behalf of their constituents, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, despite having these values and the Sask Party government saying that they have these values as well, we've seen that they have failed to maintain our social housing units, as was mentioned today — 3,000 vacant social housing units, Mr. Speaker. They've left thousands vacant, and as a result there is increased homelessness across this province, which affects people across the entire province, including our rural communities.

And we also see that they would rather increase funding to independent schools than properly fund and maintain our public schools. The issue of education underfunding has been something that we've been raising for years now, Mr. Speaker. It's something that is of a grave concern to people across this province.

They've failed to deliver a northern road strategy and that cuts off access to essential services as well.

When we talk about the investments into education funding and health care infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, there are growing and growing, ballooning infrastructure maintenance requirements that are not being met by this government. The maintenance budgets that are being put in every year are a drop in the bucket of what's needed. We don't even know the status of all of our facilities, because this is one of the least transparent governments, Mr. Speaker, and they haven't provided us with the facility condition index in years now, Mr. Speaker.

But we know, for example in health care, the last number we heard was that \$4.4 billion was required to get our health care facilities up to snuff to get them out of critical condition, which is incredibly concerning when we see the lack of investment from this government in maintaining that infrastructure, when patients

and workers talk to us about the fact that they're concerned that their facilities are going to close when they are in severe facility condition index. These ratings exist for a reason. They need to be taken seriously and this government needs to properly maintain its public infrastructure.

So it's pretty rich to see them criticizing us for this right now, Mr. Speaker. I think they've been in government for 16 years. They've had a lot of time to sort this out. They've had record revenues to sort this out and yet this is a very concerning persistent problem.

On the economy, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about jobs in Saskatchewan, we're talking about people's livelihoods, and all we get from this government during a generational affordability crisis is spin. We in the Sask NDP fully support municipal revenue sharing. We have since the 1970s when Premier Blakeney brought it in. And we want more jobs and bigger paycheques for Saskatchewan people. We know that the tax-and-squander approach doesn't cut it.

This government has presided over the loss of 21,600 jobs in rural and small communities since 2018. They've caused the closure of 860 small businesses in rural and small communities since 2018, since this Premier took office, with their out-of-touch policies. They've reduced the standard of living, have made life less affordable, and have added on 32 new taxes and fee hikes.

On top of this they refuse to suspend the gas tax. People have real affordability concerns right now, and to hear them boasting about their policies rather than . . . ignoring the real concerns of Saskatchewan people shows just how tired and out-of-touch this government is.

On the topic of being tired and out-of-touch, it's quite alarming to see that the text of this motion, Mr. Speaker, flies in the face of conversations that are happening this very week at the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. SARM, if you want to look up their tagline, their motto, their *raison d'être*, the reason that SARM exists is to be the voice of rural Saskatchewan. We need to take what they are saying very seriously. And the fact that, rather than addressing concerns that are coming from SARM, Mr. Speaker, we see this government patting themselves on the back in the Chamber. The juxtaposition of these two ideas at the same time is not lost on me this week.

And I want to talk a little bit about what's happening right now. And I know that members opposite want to talk about what has happened in years past, in the '90s when I was in grade school, Mr. Speaker. And like, look around. This is not the same old NDP. Like, no one believes that. Like, look at us. It's completely unfathomable.

Let's live in the now, Mr. Speaker. What's happening right now? Right now SARM is raising health care concerns, Mr. Speaker, right now. There was an article in February talking about how SARM was calling on the government to take immediate action to address rural health concerns with a Grow Your Own nurse practitioner program. This is of course something we've advocated for, still yet to be something that we hear from this government on.

We know we have underutilized nurse practitioners across this

province. They have the potential to serve approximately 36,000 patients out of our 200,000 that don't have access to a family doctor or nurse practitioner, Mr. Speaker. We know that despite the rhetoric from this government, we have been hearing this week in the health care panel about all the concerns that still exist in rural Saskatchewan from SARM — dealing with ambulances, nurse practitioners, questions about emergency rooms in Lloyd, mental health and addictions for youth, Mr. Speaker. Let's live in the now. These are concerns right now.

And we know that they have a lack of support for rural municipalities when it comes to health care, because we have toured around. I think I've been part of maybe three distinct health care tours since I've been elected in the past six years, and as well as, sort of, one-off visits to different communities. We know this remains a problem. We've lost 35 doctors in our province. We're losing RNs [registered nurse] in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

This government is shuttering health care facilities, and we've stood with RMs and small urban centres, with health committees, with concerned citizens, to raise these issues, some of them having to come to the legislature to get the attention of this government, because they're ignoring their letters.

We'll continue to stand with them and we will continue to stand with rural Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Mr. Steele: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to speak to the petition that we presented here. You know, I've spent a lot of time within the municipal system, like, upwards of 25 years as part of SARM board. I started as a young man as an RM councillor and became reeve. And you know, the value of working together in RMs, it's amazing.

You know, our communities started with homesteaders and become towns, villages, and grew. And they formed councils, whether it's town council or an RM council. And working together with volunteerism, the resources they had at their fingertips to get things done. And you know, I think with our revenue sharing — not think, I know — with the revenue sharing, this is a no-brainer. Working with them, putting the decision making, the revenues in their hands to make decisions locally. They can do it in a time-efficient way and in fact it's something that, you know, it's hard to describe.

I had the opportunity yesterday to go over and see some of my old friends and councillors. And you walked into the room and it's just amazing. It was just an honour to be back there and the hi's and hellos and talking about different things and, you know, Minister McMorris got up, spoke at the front, and it was so well appreciated.

And like I say, you know, this is not a competition between the opposition and ourselves to make our province successful. We want to get . . . We want it to be the most welcoming province there is. And you know, it takes a little time and effort to do that. I know we debate back and forth and we criticize a little bit here and there, and you go back in history and some of the historical things that were done. And you know, we kind of wonder why

but, you know, as we move forward, we are a place of today, not the past.

So working together to get these things in place. You know, right now in the world, you take a look at what's happening out there. I couldn't ask for a better province to be in or country at this point in time — safety. We're welcoming new Canadians ongoing. And you know, the services, as we grow, that's the thing with growing. As we're growing up as young men and women, you know, we get pains because we're getting taller, but no pain, no gain. So you know, in the same breath, you know, we might not have all the answers but working together, we're going to get it, do a pretty good job of trying to get to where we want to be. And you know, that's where I say sitting down and having dialogue, talking and, you know, we'll go back and . . .

Just one thing about history. Learn from history as we move forward. That makes decision making even better and opportunities are being more successful. You know, I can go through here . . . My fellow colleague mentioned numbers. We can go and crunch the numbers about 2008, 4.3 billion in unconditional funding since 2007-2008. Well that will be revisited and revisited and revisited.

But I think that common sense aspect of what I seen yesterday when I walked into the SARM convention, what we're going to hear today from the Premier and when he gets up and speaks, is going to be pretty amazing. We're not going to get everything fixed today but we might have a chance of doing a few things.

And you know, revenue sharing, I like to make the point there's one taxpayer in the province. So really revenue sharing is distributing back what we've collected to be used in a way that's supportive of our communities.

And like volunteerism in the communities, like in the RM that I was part of, we had services that were put together with four or five RMs and a town and two or three villages to deliver EMS [emergency medical services] services and, you know, firefighting services. And we pooled our resources to get to a point that we had some quality type, and we would keep working and revisit it.

You know, we have a five-year plan moving forward that, you know, maybe that old fire truck might need to be replaced. But we'd put a little bit of money away in reserves and we planned to get it, tried to keep up with inflation of course, but who knows with that, because we have certain individuals like hitting us with other taxes and stuff like that. They really knocked the legs out from underneath us. And we won't mention names because we're trying to be on a positive note here right now, so, you know.

[11:30]

And like, that's how we're going to get to be communities where people want to come and be part of. You know, like you said earlier, the world is kind of a crazy place right now, you know, as far as safety and health care and all that stuff. But, you know, whether it's Regina, Saskatoon, or rural Saskatchewan, you know, we can make it as safe and positive as possible working together.

So moving forward, like I say, with revenue sharing, the money

is going back in there. It's not being wasted. They're putting it . . . whether it's recreational or like fire safety or EMS or health care and all that type of thing. But you know, there's always room for improvement.

And like I say with . . . You know, for example we increased our population by 300,000. Well you know, that was our goal. I remember when I was a young guy we left after, you know, fall hit and we headed over to Alberta and we worked on the drilling rigs. Come back to try and keep going and keep operating and those types of things. So you know, but we're still here. And you know, Saskatchewan roots run deep. You're starting to see that people want to come back.

So as we're trying to put things together to make sure we have health care, like nurse practitioners. This is an example here. We're debating it today, well many days we have. I remember back when I was on the SARM board — and I can't remember if we were in power or it was the opposition that was in power — we presented that to government to say, you know, to fill our needs of physicians in rural Saskatchewan, this is a way we can do it. The nurse practitioner society come and they talked to us. And we come and we asked and we thought we were, you know, gaining — excuse me, I've got a bit of a cold — gaining ground, but it just didn't seem to go anywhere. So here we are, and I was just crunching the numbers. Approximately that's before, say 2007 or whatever in there. We're about 17, 18 years later and by gosh, we're starting to make a move on it. That's making progress, right. Well okay, we'll leave it at that.

But I mean, like these things can be utilized. I said on physician recruitment we went all over the world looking for physicians and trying to bring their countries. But you know, when they come to the country and living in rural Saskatchewan, it's a culture change for a lot of folks. They don't have the same services and everything that they had there and their families have to come.

But I guess the moral of the story I'm trying to get here today — I've got a few minutes left — but you know working together and, like I say, went over to SARM today in the bear-pit session. There's going to be some discussions and there's going to be other speakers here today that talk about more numbers of what we're short here and we're short there.

But I think, you know, we can at some point in time . . . not think we are going to, but I know we will try to get the funds in place to do what we need to do. So you know, rather than criticizing back and forth, you know, that's part of the work and the gain that we need to — not need to, but we do . . . well I do and I know the rest, we all have the greatest respect for each other's opinion. But we'll get there, whether it's health care or education right now.

Like back at home in my constituency I have mixed opinions coming in on how we're moving forward on . . . you know, and they hope that we get there. But we don't want to hold our kids at ransom. They need to be in that school so they come to the end of July, or I mean end of June, and they're ready for summer and having fun at the lakes and with their families. So hopefully we don't go down that road and say, well we're going to hold them, you know . . . but it has before and we'll see where we're at right now.

But I hope we come to a common ground, you know and that, like with health care, you know, wait times and those types of things, we see wait times in the very southwest corner just like we do in the city here, and booking knee replacements, hip replacements and those types of things, to get in there. And I hope we can, you know, cure that system, but it's going to take some time. You know, and first responders, gosh, if you're anywhere by distance, the southwest is distance from the responders that are going to come and save you.

So you know, like I say, there's going to be more discussion here, but on that I'm going to end. And I'd just like to say, well I support the motion that we have here today. But you know, we'll get there. And today I hope everyone gets a chance to go over to the bear pit and listen and interact with the SARM and councillors and stuff and hear their concerns. Because by hearing their concerns we'll come back with a better vision on what we need to do and what we try to do moving forward.

So at that I, you know, I'll close and pass it on to the next speaker. And thank you . . . [inaudible] . . . very much.

The Deputy Speaker: — I'd like to caution members not to use other members' names. Use their portfolio please. I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter in this afternoon to the motion before us, Mr. Speaker. You know, of course I've spent the last couple days over with delegates from across rural Saskatchewan, from municipalities, RMs from across the province at the SARM convention, Mr. Speaker. I think, you know, to a person there, Mr. Speaker, and to a council and the leadership as well, they would be looking for more than the sort of politicized debate that the member from Melville brought to this Assembly here today, because what they identified are some pretty important issues to be acted upon.

And I think they'd say, oh yeah, that's the legislature making a bunch of noise here and political battles or staking out ground in advance of the election, Mr. Speaker. But I think what they'd be more interested in, Mr. Speaker, is a meaningful debate. And set aside debate — meaningful action, Mr. Speaker, and collaboration and partnership, Mr. Speaker, to deliver on fixing the rural health care challenges across this province, so many challenges that have gotten so much worse under this government.

You know, and my good buddy in the back — we both cheer for the Boston Bruins — he's heckling and making noise, Mr. Speaker, but he knows this better than anyone, Mr. Speaker. You know, he was made famous about a year and a half ago, Mr. Speaker, when the community of Kamsack came together and demanded action, Mr. Speaker, around health care. You know, and that guy, he . . . well it was the Kamsack shuffle, Mr. Speaker. He couldn't get outta Dodge faster, Mr. Speaker.

And that's the story, Mr. Speaker, of this Sask Party government all too often. Now I could run fast over to the Co-op at Canora to get the best poppyseed roll in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, but I would have taken the time to meet with the good folks of Kamsack who were coming together for action on their community, Mr. Speaker.

And again we have all these delegates at SARM right now, 2,000 delegates, some of the most salt-of-the earth, earnest people I know who lead day in, day out, who are close to the people and their services, Mr. Speaker. And as I speak with those members, I think they expect more than the loud heckling from the back from the one member, or the motion, Mr. Speaker, that's really kind of just more political stuntery and setting up so-called political debates, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to moving the yardsticks today, Mr. Speaker.

You know, areas that we need action on, Mr. Speaker, and areas that this government have really failed rural Saskatchewan is that of connectivity. Now we know in 2024, internet connectivity — high-quality internet connectivity, broadband, and mobile connectivity — isn't a luxury; it's an essential service. It's a necessity, and it's about basic safety and quality of life, and it presents incredible economic opportunity for rural communities and rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

We know that even just if you look at where technology has shifted in our world-class agriculture, Mr. Speaker, we need connectivity to be able to interact and utilize and deploy those technologies, Mr. Speaker. More than that, we know rural Saskatchewan presents such opportunities to families and workers to locate, for industry to build, but not without connectivity, Mr. Speaker. And instead of recognizing how important this opportunity is for this province, we've had a government that's offered it lip service, Mr. Speaker, and slow-walked the needed progress and the importance of securing connectivity first.

And we're better positioned really than anywhere else in Canada to make this happen, Mr. Speaker. We've been pushing this government, Mr. Speaker, to forgo the dividend they've been taking from SaskTel, Mr. Speaker. That might sound small when I say it like that. Talking about hundreds of millions of dollars that that government has taken away from rural communities and rural connectivity that could have been leveraged and that could have connected Saskatchewan from the Southeast to the Southwest all the way up through the North, Mr. Speaker, from small towns and villages to First Nations, Mr. Speaker, and finding solutions and working to make sure that farms are connected, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we've got the members heckling again from the back here saying they've got all the solutions. I think that just shows how out of touch they are with the villages and towns and farms and First Nations and small communities across this province, Mr. Speaker. You know, their connectivity here in Regina, Mr. Speaker, might be all right, but that's not good enough, Mr. Speaker. We need to connect Saskatchewan. This is about opportunity for everyone in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Our health care critic identified so many solutions over the last number of years to make sure that we're recruiting and retaining and making sure we're securing acute and emergency services in hospitals in rural Saskatchewan, importantly to make sure that we're able to make sure that Saskatchewan people are able to get those emergency services when minutes matter within their life. Whether you're in Canora or whether you're down in the Southwest or anywhere in between, this matters.

We're also working to make sure that people have a family

doctor, people have a nurse practitioner, that someone has a lead health professional in their life. The reality under this Sask Party government, although they like to boast, Mr. Speaker, they fail to perform for the people of Saskatchewan. We have over 200,000 people that are without a family doctor at this point. We have emergency services, Mr. Speaker, that are nowhere where they need to be, many in this province waiting hours for an ambulance, ambulance calls that have gone unfulfilled, Mr. Speaker. That's not acceptable. These are the kind of things that we should be addressing.

We should be addressing mental health and addictions right across this province, importantly in rural Saskatchewan, recognizing the pressures on producers as well, Mr. Speaker. And we need to recognize the challenge as well around the record of this government because they're slow-walking connectivity and not making connectivity happen. Because of the choices of this government, Mr. Speaker, the costs are being borne by rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, on front after front.

This Premier unfortunately — because no one wants a record like this for this province we all love — has the worst jobs record in Canada, but it's most pronounced in rural Saskatchewan. If you look at the rural regions itself, I understand that over 40,000 jobs have been lost since the Premier has been in office. That's just five years ago, Mr. Speaker. If you count in the towns and villages and small cities, Mr. Speaker, you're talking about a loss of 18,000 jobs in five years, Mr. Speaker. You know, that's not a record that one should be proud of, Mr. Speaker.

And you think of a government that's, you know, been so short-sighted. I think of a few years ago when that government brought forward that PST on to construction, which served as a gut punch to growth, Mr. Speaker, that pushed away jobs and workers and drove them out of communities and out of this province, Mr. Speaker. And that drove away investment.

And when I'm over at SARM and meeting with municipal leaders, they also know the costs of this, Mr. Speaker. They know the cost because they're building bridges, they're replacing culverts, they're building roads, Mr. Speaker. And you know what they're doing that with? Then there's, adding on top of that, the PST to the Sask Party government who stuck local taxpayers with that bill, Mr. Speaker. And they did it at the same time that they peeled back the revenue-sharing formula from 1 per cent to 0.75 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Broke that commitment, pulled back those dollars, and then stuck rural families and rural communities with the bill.

And if you look at the bridge funding, Mr. Speaker, the need for bridge replacement in Saskatchewan is significant, Mr. Speaker. Rural municipalities are grappling with this. This is a government that's cut that funding. It was spoken to directly at the podium yesterday by the leadership of SARM, Mr. Speaker. And we hear a lot of noise from those entitled, arrogant members opposite, Mr. Speaker, but we don't see much respect for the real voices and challenges that rural communities, many of whom they are supposed to represent, are bringing to the table.

We see the same in agriculture, Mr. Speaker, where we need to ensure fairness for the livestock sector, where we need to address meat pricing, fairness for producers and consumers, and to ensure that we're stepping up and working on drought in a proactive

way, in a planned way, Mr. Speaker.

[11:45]

You know, as we head into a growing season, we're all pulling for the rain and the precipitation that producers need for that growing season, Mr. Speaker, but we also expect our government to work with municipal leaders like SARM and with the agricultural sector to plan to address these things. This is a government letting down rural Saskatchewan. We should all . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I would like to ask the member to be cautious on the words you're using. "Arrogant" isn't a proper word to be using.

I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now for something completely different from somebody that knows what's going on instead of the member prior. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am proud to stand in this Assembly today and support the motion put forth by my colleague from Melville-Saltcoats and seconded by my member from Cypress Hills.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP members opposite have never served in government, and it shows in their behaviour. They have no understanding of today's economy and no idea the supports our government provides to our municipalities, both rural and urban.

Recently they have been reflecting very fondly of Sask Party governments past. I can assure you they were not doing so at the time. The NDP talking positively of a Sask Party government is only a mere distraction from the NDP governments of yesterday — NDP governments that closed hospitals in rural Saskatchewan and invested nothing back into health care, education, or communities. We are not going back to those dark days of NDP governments, where people were leaving in droves and luggage sets were the popular high school graduation gifts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, since the NDP government was elected in 1991 and up until 2001, provincial revenue sharing with municipalities was slashed by 56 per cent and had a zero increase since 1997. The lowest level of revenue sharing was under the NDP government in 2001-2002. Funding was a meagre \$54.87 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a Saskatchewan Party press release from May 2001 says that Regina mayor Pat Fiocco told the Municipal Affairs minister that municipalities are facing a crisis situation. Speaking on behalf of all city mayors, he warned the government that another vague promise of more municipal funding next year was not acceptable. A shameless, shameless disregard for the pleas from our municipal leaders across the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, even though the NDP government wasn't listening to the municipal leaders, the Saskatchewan Party was. In the 2008-2009 budget, revenue sharing increased by \$7.9 million. This was not the last increase in that year. On April 24th, 2008, the government announced another increase to revenue sharing with the municipalities, an increase of \$10.4 million on top of the budgeted increase. That's right, a total increase of \$18.3 million.

Unlike the NDP government, the Saskatchewan Party government answered the calls from the municipalities to increase funding, not calls from an anonymous elected leader but from a real person. The early partnership with municipalities laid the groundwork for future revenue sharing that continues today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, since the initial Saskatchewan Party budget in 2007-2008, more than \$4.3 billion in unconditional, no-strings-attached provincial funding has been allocated to municipalities under the municipal revenue-sharing program. The amount of municipal revenue-sharing funding is based on the value of three-quarters of one point of the provincial sales tax from two years prior. For example, 2024-2025 budget, municipal revenue-sharing amount is based on the PST collected in the 2022-2023 budgeted year.

Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the NDP members opposite, I would like to point out the obvious: with increased investment in the province and our growing economy, the municipal revenue sharing will also continue to grow. That's right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's growth that works for everyone.

I am also proud to say that this municipal revenue sharing is a one of a kind in Canada, a made-in-Saskatchewan solution, a solution that municipalities can plan their own budgets on. In just a few short days when the Finance minister presents her budget in this House, I am eagerly anticipating an even higher municipal sharing amount.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot stress, I cannot stress how important it is to work with our locally elected mayors, reeves, and councillors. These women and men largely volunteer their time to keep their communities strong, growing, and vibrant long into the future. Thank you. Like my colleague from Cypress Hills just pointed out his many years of service, thank you to all elected leaders for putting your name on the ballot and supporting your community and your province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on top of the annual municipal revenue-sharing program, the Government of Saskatchewan has signed on with the Government of Canada and implemented the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. The Government of Saskatchewan contributed \$584 million and secured a further \$907 million from the federal government. Through this program more than \$1.7 billion has been invested in infrastructure projects across the province, projects such as recreational upgrades and capital builds, civic wastewater treatment, water quality and supply, bridge replacements, and upgrades to accommodate increased truck and load traffic. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in short we are investing in projects to help modernize and grow our communities and our province.

After years of neglect by NDP governments, years where facilities were closed, maintenance was minimized, and capital building was non-existent, the NDP placed Saskatchewan in a huge capital deficit. If you don't continue to build and maintain your infrastructure, you quickly find yourself in a deep hole.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud and honoured to be part of a government committed to building schools, hospitals, long-term care homes, bridges, highways, and other critical infrastructure that the people of Saskatchewan need and deserve. We will not go back to the dark days of the NDP, back to the days when the

NDP premier was proud to be a wee little province, back when people were leaving in droves for a brighter future, back when the NDP were happy to be a have-not province. We will not go back to those NDP days where they would crash our economy, chase people away with lack of jobs and the prospect of a bright future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, your Sask Party government is building a strong province where people want to live, get an education, work, play, and raise their family in a safe, caring, vibrant community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the motion made by my colleague from Melville-Saltcoats. The motion reads as follows:

That this Assembly supports the Government of Saskatchewan's support for municipalities through programs and investments like the municipal revenue-sharing program, the Investing in Canada Infrastructure fund, and building new schools and health care facilities; and

That this Assembly denounces the opposition NDP for their lack of support for rural municipalities, including their history of shuttering health care facilities and abandoning taxpayers to maintain their own infrastructure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am proud to be part of this government that is building a strong and vibrant community by community for a strong province in the Dominion of Canada, and I am proud to call my colleague from Melville-Saltcoats a friend, and my colleague also from Cypress Hills as a friend, and also my several other colleagues on this side of the House. Estevan, Weyburn-Big Muddy colleagues, yeah, yeah. Thank you.

An Hon. Member: — How about the Nutana report from SARM?

Mr. D. Harrison: — Yeah, the Nutana, yeah. That's good.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in all sincerity, the NDP rode this province into the ground, crashed the economy. Nobody, nobody wanted to move here. In the 16 years we've been blessed to be government in this province, we have seen people moving here, arriving here, creating businesses, creating jobs, raising families, getting educated, and having their families remain here in the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very, very important to continue this growth, and I am proud to be a part of it, and I'm proud to second that motion from my colleague from Melville-Saltcoats. Thank you.

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

Ms. A. Young: — You know, I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and what a privilege it is to follow the member from Cannington. You know, I listened to the remarks from the member from Cypress Hills and, you know, for a heartbeat, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was feeling a little soft on the government. It was a thoughtful, earnest entry about that what I believe is the best in Saskatchewan — common sense, common values like know-

how, an entrepreneurial spirit, a willingness to come together and get it done and build a better tomorrow.

But as I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, now I get to follow the member from Cannington who certainly gave us something a little bit different. And you know, Mr. Speaker, it's difficult to get a man to understand something if his salary depends, or . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Pardon me, Mr. Speaker. I forgot how triggered members opposite were by pronouns and gender. But it's difficult to get a man or a woman or someone beyond the binary to understand something if their very salary depends on them not understanding it.

And now members opposite, Mr. Speaker, they like to talk about, you know, complaining, all these whiny women complaining. And you can see the members opposite twitch, twitch, twitch with every complaint. But they're not complaints, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the question that people in Saskatchewan are asking themselves right now is, am I better off than I was five years ago? Are my children better off living, working, and staying in Saskatchewan?

And you know, in this province we used to have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we used to have a pretty good deal. You'd work hard. You'd go to school, maybe learn a trade, stay on the farm. You'd maybe buy a house in a safe community, and you'd get a better life for your children. You could retire in comfort. You could live in dignity, and maybe you could have a little bit of fun while you were at it.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under this government, that is broken. That compact is broken, because this is a government that is so tired and out of touch they can't see how out of steam they truly are. Now, Mr. Speaker, that compact that we talk about is important, not just to people today, but to people, the future of this province. And you know, the member from Cypress Hills mentioned this is kind of crazy times it feels like we live in right now. And it is, and it's easy to see why people in Saskatchewan are frustrated, frustrated with a tired and out-of-touch government that is not listening.

We have a government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is actively taking years off the lives of Saskatchewan people, a government that just this fall evicted 200 seniors onto the freezing streets of Regina, and had to be dragged kicking and screaming to a solution. A government that earlier this fall decided that the most pressing issue facing this province wasn't cost of living; wasn't skyrocketing food bank use; wasn't their worst-in-the-country jobs record; wasn't our crowded emergency room, shuttered hospitals, and people having medical treatment in hallways. No, the most pressing issue that this government sought to address was what kids call each other at school, call themselves at school.

Let's not forget. You know, they want to talk about the past. They want to talk about 16 years ago, Mr. Speaker. So let's live in the now, because if we want to talk about 16 years ago, it is very easy to talk about the record of shameless conservative governments in this province. It is easy to talk about the record that their predecessors, the Devine government, left for the people of this province to clean up.

[12:00]

So it's fair game right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for people to be asking, is this the most shameless, conservative government in history? Is that why things are so, so terrible right now? Or is our life expectancy so low, our standard of living, our crime so high? Is it because they just don't care?

You know, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about municipalities. Our friends from SARM are in town. We're talking about rural Saskatchewan. We're talking about remote Saskatchewan. And you know what? I didn't hear a single member of that government mention in the 35 minutes they had to talk about this, I don't think I heard a single one of them say the words "Indigenous" or "First Nations." Important . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, okay, I stand corrected, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The member from Melville-Saltcoats says he talked about it. But, Mr. Speaker . . . And I apologize if you did. The member knows he is one of my favourite government members.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's easy to look at the record of this tired and out-of-touch government. You look at this motion, and what are they talking about? A municipal revenue-sharing formula that was originally pioneered under an NDP government and a federal government program. That's the record that they want to champion, Mr. Speaker. And they want to denounce this government.

Well I've got a couple minutes left on the clock and I would like to talk about the record of this government. Under this government the number of people in Saskatchewan who have died while on a surgical waiting list has increased 66 per cent. We have the highest rate of new HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] diagnoses and we are one of only two provinces where this has gone up from 2018. We have the lowest life expectancy amongst Canadian provinces, which has fallen for three consecutive years. We have the highest rates of intimate partner violence of any province, twice the national average, and the rate of intimate partner violence in northern Saskatchewan is the highest of anywhere in Canada — anywhere in Canada.

We have the highest crime severity index amongst provinces, twice the Canadian rate. We have the highest rate of crime amongst Canadian provinces, again, twice the national rate. Under this government, Mr. Speaker, crime severity has increased by eight and a half per cent. The crime rate has increased by nearly 7 per cent.

And let's not get started on the economy, Mr. Speaker, where we've seen a government whose private capital investment that they were so proud to talk about today is just over half of what it was in 2014, adjusted for population and inflation. That's really something, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure that would be a record I would be so proud of had I been in government for 16 years.

We have the lowest rate of job growth amongst Canadian provinces, and their economic growth rate has averaged just slightly more than half a per cent per year, the second lowest amongst Canadian provinces. Under this government, for three, three of the last six years they've had negative economic growth, and as was pointed out by my colleague the member for Regina Rosemont, this is most keenly felt in rural Saskatchewan, where we have seen 40,600 jobs lost in just this Premier's term. We've seen 860 businesses in rural Saskatchewan alone close their doors.

Mr. Speaker, the only record this government has is a record of being last. That's the only thing they're first about and it's clear why they don't want to live in the now and talk about their record.

The Deputy Speaker: — The 65-minute period has expired. The 10-minute period of question-and-answer period will begin. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was listening very intently to the speeches from the members opposite, and particularly when the member for Melville-Saltcoats was accusing the NDP of talking down health care workers.

I take great issue with this. It's absolutely something we have never done, Mr. Speaker. What message does he think it sends to health care workers when they take their time to boast and create political stances like this, political opportunities for themselves to boast about themselves rather than working to retain nurses in rural Saskatchewan?

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

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think this government is very proud of their record, but certainly around the health human resources action plan where they've created a number of initiatives to bring over 1,000 nurses up to our employment, up into our rural communities and certainly into our urban centres, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We can talk about the myriad of investments that we have made to support health in this province — urgent care centres; just the last two recent announcements about the breast health centre, Mr. Deputy Speaker; the nurse practitioners; the record investment that we've had in hospitals and long-term care in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Those are the investments we're very proud of. We're very proud of the people that work in those facilities and that support those facilities and provide health care to our residents in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In her remarks the member for Saskatoon Fairview said that Allan Blakeney brought in revenue sharing. Well I can tell you one thing that they did is they brought the . . . got everyone revenue and they each wanted to share it. That's how they did it. They didn't hand it back; it was a one-way street. They shared so much revenue, the NDP government, that in fact I remember when there was people out having to fix their own roads due to their increased levels of revenue sharing.

To the member from Saskatoon Fairview: do you agree with our government's fair and predictable funding for municipalities that has increased 134 per cent since we formed government?

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, they've reduced the revenue sharing to municipalities. There are people who need bridges across this province. One per cent to 0.75, Mr. Speaker —

municipalities remember that. That amount is very important to them as they work on their municipal projects. People have memory. I appreciate the attempt at a history lesson, Mr. Speaker, but the municipalities of this province remember what this government has done. And they're going to remember it come election time, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The member from Cannington was certainly enthusiastic in his defence of his government. Mr. Speaker, does the member think that it's defensible that there were 951 service disruptions in Saskatchewan's rural health facilities reported just between 2019 and 2023, an average of two disruptions for every three days?

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

Mr. D. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Our government worked very hard with our human health resource management plan, and we're very proud of the employees we've recruited both from the Philippines, expanded the seats in our local universities and polytechnic. And we are staffing our hospitals and we are looking to prevent all those into the future.

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

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Under the previous NDP government, the only thing they did in rural Saskatchewan was close schools and hospitals.

To the member from Regina Rosemont, who likes me: what did Lorne Calvert do — other than close the Canora ag office the day after a meeting with me, with Rural Revitalization, and then he made the announcement of closing the ag office — what did he and the NDP do for rural Saskatchewan?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course previous NDP governments, the previous NDP government, Premier Calvert was a very strong supporter of economic development and of agriculture, Mr. Speaker, building a foundation for investment, of unprecedented investment in rural Saskatchewan with the biggest mining investment we've seen in generations, Mr. Speaker. And building our population and building the SINP [Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program] program to get our population on track, Mr. Speaker, to build our financial position and billions of dollars in surplus to be invested in the lives of Saskatchewan people.

What we see is a Sask Party government that's walked away from that approach, that's squandered dollars, that's failed people in rural Saskatchewan with respect to health care, that's reduced municipal revenue sharing from 1 per cent to 0.75, that's reduced bridge funding. And then well, Mr. Speaker, they've stuck the rural municipalities of Saskatchewan with the PST when they want to do a bridge project, when they want to do a culvert project, or they want to fix a highway . . .

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening closely to the member from Cannington's speech. It seemed like he sort of ran out of steam close to the end and wasn't sure about the rest of his talking points, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to hear a little bit more from him.

What does he think about the 860 rural businesses that have closed since the Premier took office? Would he say that that's growth that works for everyone?

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

Mr. D. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This government's very proud of their lowest small business tax anywhere [inaudible interjection] . . . No, we are not raising it. Thank you. I have to correct the member opposite. But no we are not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our businesses are strong both in rural and urban areas. The biggest challenge for businesses is the labour market. Everyone, everyone is searching for labour and employees. The biggest detriment to businesses, small and large, is the carbon tax. And those members opposite continue to support it. They don't know the harm it causes, and our government is doing its best to . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Arm River.

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On this side of the House, we believe in funding education by growing the economy. This is where we fundamentally differ from members opposite, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Growing our economy pays for health care, pays for highways, pays for services people need. To the member from Saskatoon Fairview: do you support your leader in funding education on the backs of homeowners and farmers by allowing school boards to set their own mill rates?

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not sure which notes he's reading from, but we haven't said that, Mr. Speaker. A hundred per cent not.

Mr. Speaker, do I believe in adequately investing in education? One hundred per cent. Do I believe in adequately investing in health care? A hundred per cent. Affordability issues that we have in this province, Mr. Speaker, we need to address these issues.

It's not just that the economy will trickle down, Mr. Speaker. These are government decisions; these are government priorities. And we need a new government that's going to make new priorities.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from

Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — It's good to see my buddy from Moosomin get up to ask a question. Good to hear him. Good to see my friend from Melville in this debate. An important matter for those in your area certainly is the imposition of the PST onto bridges and highways and culverts.

Another issue certainly that's important is the Highway No. 8 from Moosomin to Rocanville that's just not in the repair at all. And we don't hear boo from you as members for that important area and connecting those potash workers in that region to that important mine.

I guess I look to you as the member for Melville. Where do you stand on this? And why are there so many delays on Highway 8?

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

Mr. Kaeding: — Well just to correct the record, that actually is the member from Moosomin's responsibility. But however, we have . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Absolutely. And we did have this conversation with our minister. Met with the responsible municipalities around that area and certainly recognize that that is an important link to our mine sector, to our ag sector, and certainly recognize that there will be a lot of work on that.

What we've seen is also record investment in our roads and highways across the province here. Thousands of kilometres of main highway, passing lanes, creating safety along the No. 16 which definitely does run through my constituency, and connector highways, primary highways across the province. So we've seen record investments in highways of . . .

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

Mr. Francis: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We continually see the opposition tap dancing around the issues that are important to rural municipalities. Their leader is clear that she would give more powers to teachers through the school division taxation policy. To the member from Saskatoon Fairview: do you agree with that? Yes or no?

The Deputy Speaker: — The 75-minute period, debate period has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 2 — Suspension of Provincial Fuel Tax

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Mr. Wotherspoon.]

[12:15]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to be on my feet and speak to this motion:

That the Assembly calls upon the government to suspend the collection of the provincial fuel tax from gasoline and diesel for a period of six months in order to help families struggling with the high cost of living.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again and again we see that the top priorities of the residents of Saskatchewan include concerns around health care as well as the cost-of-living crisis that we continue to see people struggle through.

But unfortunately we see that these top priorities are missing from this government. They're just not on this government's radar. The real struggle of Saskatchewan people, their challenges and their calls for relief are falling on the deaf ears of this tired and out-of-touch Sask Party government.

In their place we see half measures. We see vague promises. We see recycled talking points — today was a case in point — and truly a series of decisions that have made life even less affordable for the people of Saskatchewan. And I need only think back to recent budgets and the taxes and fee increases we saw in recent budgets gone by.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, people want and deserve an affordable life, a place that lives up to its history as a place that values health care, health care workers, and the patients they care for — and that keeps that health care public.

Instead we see a government that is neglecting, dismantling, privatizing that system. People want a place that is full of opportunity to grow their family, to grow old in comfort because of the vibrancy of their surrounding community; because of good, reliable services; because of well-paid jobs, and an affordable life that will ensure they have access to basics, necessities, but also some leisure time. Some enjoyment, some fun.

The Sask NDP has been calling consistently for a temporary end to the gas tax such as we saw from the Manitoba NDP under Wab Kinew, under Premier Wab Kinew. What did we see happen with the relief that was offered to the people of Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We saw inflation rates drop, and we saw inflation go down to the very lowest in Manitoba where that temporary measure was announced.

So not only does this measure offer some relief to families, it has an impact, a broader impact on the local economy. Right now Manitoba's inflation rates are lowest at 0.8 per cent. And according to Statistics Canada, Statistics Canada actually credits this decision to temporarily remove the gas tax as having that impact.

And I'll quote from Statistics Canada which recently gave a shout-out to Premier Wab Kinew and to the Manitoba NDP government, saying, "Lower gas prices in Manitoba contributed to the national decline following a temporary suspension of the provincial gas tax." And that's a decline in inflation.

So we've been very consistent about calling for this relief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and so far we've seen no action from the Sask

Party government. We've also been calling for other things that go to this cost-of-living crisis.

Thanks to the innovation and to the forward thinking of previous NDP governments, we have our beloved Crowns — well what's left of them under this government anyway — and one of the benefits of having Crowns is that surely they can step in to offer some relief to people with their utilities during a generational cost-of-living crisis. But instead what we've seen, six years under this Premier, we've seen the cost of electricity go up 114 per cent for the everyday working people of Saskatchewan. They are paying 114 per cent more than they were paying when Premier Moe took office, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a shame.

And meanwhile we haven't seen the kind of investments we need to see to grow a more diverse grid and invest in the renewables that we know are increasingly affordable and that we have plenty of in Saskatchewan.

We've also called for an end to the waste and mismanagement that we continue to see from this Sask Party government. In health care we've learned recently that we are spending over a hundred million on agency nurses, on travelling nurses. This is unacceptable, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we see a government that is doing this at the expense of building local capacity in health care, in coming up with a real plan not only to recruit new health care workers, but to retain them in this province.

And I'm not at all surprised to see this government's decision not to release the report that we touched on in question period today. A report that was consistently released in December, previously, they are withholding until after session. And we can draw only one conclusion from that, well, two conclusions: that our concerns are confirmed that this government is now the least transparent government in Saskatchewan history, but also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the contents of that report will be damning for the Sask Party government. They will be damning.

We continue to see vanity projects. Tens of millions spent on a new marshals service, during an affordability crisis, no less, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A marshals service that existing police have outright panned. They've said, this is not the right direction. And this Saskatchewan NDP has said that we could be using those tens of millions of dollars to invest in local police, in community policing, and in mental health supports. Because we know that the factors driving a lot of the increased need for police are driven by mental health and addiction, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We continue to see housing policies that drive that waste and mismanagement. There is perhaps no other file that so clearly demonstrates the abject policy failures of this Sask Party government. We see an increased reliance on hotels. That's more money going out of public coffers on a crisis reaction to the growing homelessness crisis. The only person that that is benefiting, the only entity that that is benefiting are the hotels that are increasingly getting that business — hotels, I would add, where we see a Sask Party MLA as one of the owners and investors of the hotel being paid the most, used the most often, and inflating their rates the highest. Absolutely shameful behaviour from this government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We see 600 million in waste on these 3,000 vacant housing units across the province. That's money that we could be incorporating

into health care, into education to counteract the relief that we offer Saskatchewan people at the pumps, for example, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But instead we see that wasted on vacant social housing units, spent on forgone rents, utilities, and taxes that still need to be paid on those units.

And the Minister of Social Services, you know, he shakes his head when I talk about this. Sometimes he heckles when I present the petition that we have on vacant housing units. And he has not countered with how many hundreds of millions he thinks is being wasted on those thousands of vacant Sask Housing units. So if he thinks my numbers are wrong, if he thinks that 600 million is wrong, counter with what he thinks is being wasted on those 3,000 empty social housing units.

We've seen short-sighted cuts in the area of harm reduction. Just shameful decisions motivated by, I just don't even know what at this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Just totally contrary to the evidence, totally contrary to what the community is calling for, totally contrary to what we know will save money and lives in ... [inaudible interjection] ... yes, harm reduction is demonstrated to save money and lives.

In the province with the highest HIV rates in the country, two times the national average, the only province where we've actually seen those HIV rates increase since 2018, and we've decided to cut back on clean needles, on clean paraphernalia.

You know what we're seeing in our communities now, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We're seeing people inject drugs instead of smoke them. We're seeing people fight in the lobbies of community-based organizations over access to clean paraphernalia. We're seeing SHA needle depository bins go missing. People are stealing those bins and using those used needles.

This is the wrong direction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it is going to cost the public dearly. I just, I have no idea what they're thinking. I have no idea, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That represents hundreds of millions of dollars that we're going to spend now on needless health crises that could be going into housing, roads, education, health care, actual solutions to the issue of crime, crime severity — highest crime severity in the country. Let's look at actual solutions, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The fallout of these accumulated failures are unfortunate in terms of their impact on lives but also in terms of their financial cost. And the people of Saskatchewan are going to be picking up the tab.

We have the second-highest rate of death on the surgical wait-list. And I sat through question period today. According to them, everything is great in health care. Oh, there's a few challenges because there was that pandemic, but they're on the right track. Totally dismissing and negating the real concerns of health care workers in urban and rural centres who are crying out for more help from this government.

The lowest life expectancy in Canada, the only province where we have seen life expectancy fall consistently year over year for three consecutive years. My God, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if that isn't damning, if that isn't an indictment of this Sask Party government's approach to health care, I don't know what is.

The worst rates of domestic violence in the country. And you

know, we saw it again in this 75-minute debate. Oh, we need to build a strong economy. That's what the Sask Party's interested in doing. We need to build a strong economy, then we can invest in our public services. Except, except — news flash — you have the second-worst economic growth in the country, second-worst in the country. They've actually had negative growth during three of the six years that this Premier has been in office, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So Saskatchewan people right now have the worst of both worlds. No relief at the pump, no cost-of-living relief. They are increasingly stressed and stretched. And meanwhile, when they need to turn to the public services that they rely on, they've been dismantled and cut and neglected by this Sask Party government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Saskatchewan NDP will continue to remain laser focused on the things that matter to Saskatchewan people, including getting them the cost-of-living relief that they so desperately need, investing in health care so that during the worst moments of their life, they can turn to a public system that has their back.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will move to adjourn debate on the priority motion today. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre has moved to adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to accept the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:30.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Scott Moe
Premier
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Lori Carr
Minister of Highways

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill
Minister of Education

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Crown Investments Corporation
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Power Corporation
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Telecommunications
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Water Corporation
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority

Hon. Bronwyn Eyre
Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Hon. Joe Hargrave
Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement
Minister Responsible for the
Global Transportation Hub Authority

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
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Minister of Immigration and Career Training
Minister Responsible for Innovation
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan

Hon. Everett Hindley
Minister of Health

Hon. Gene Makowsky
Minister of Social Services

Hon. David Marit
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Water Security Agency

Hon. Tim McLeod
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,
Seniors and Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Don McMorris
Minister of Government Relations
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for
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Minister Responsible for the
Provincial Capital Commission
Minister Responsible for the
Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board

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Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety
Minister Responsible for the Firearms Secretariat

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Minister Responsible for
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Hon. Christine Tell
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Hon. Gordon Wyant
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