



FOURTH SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

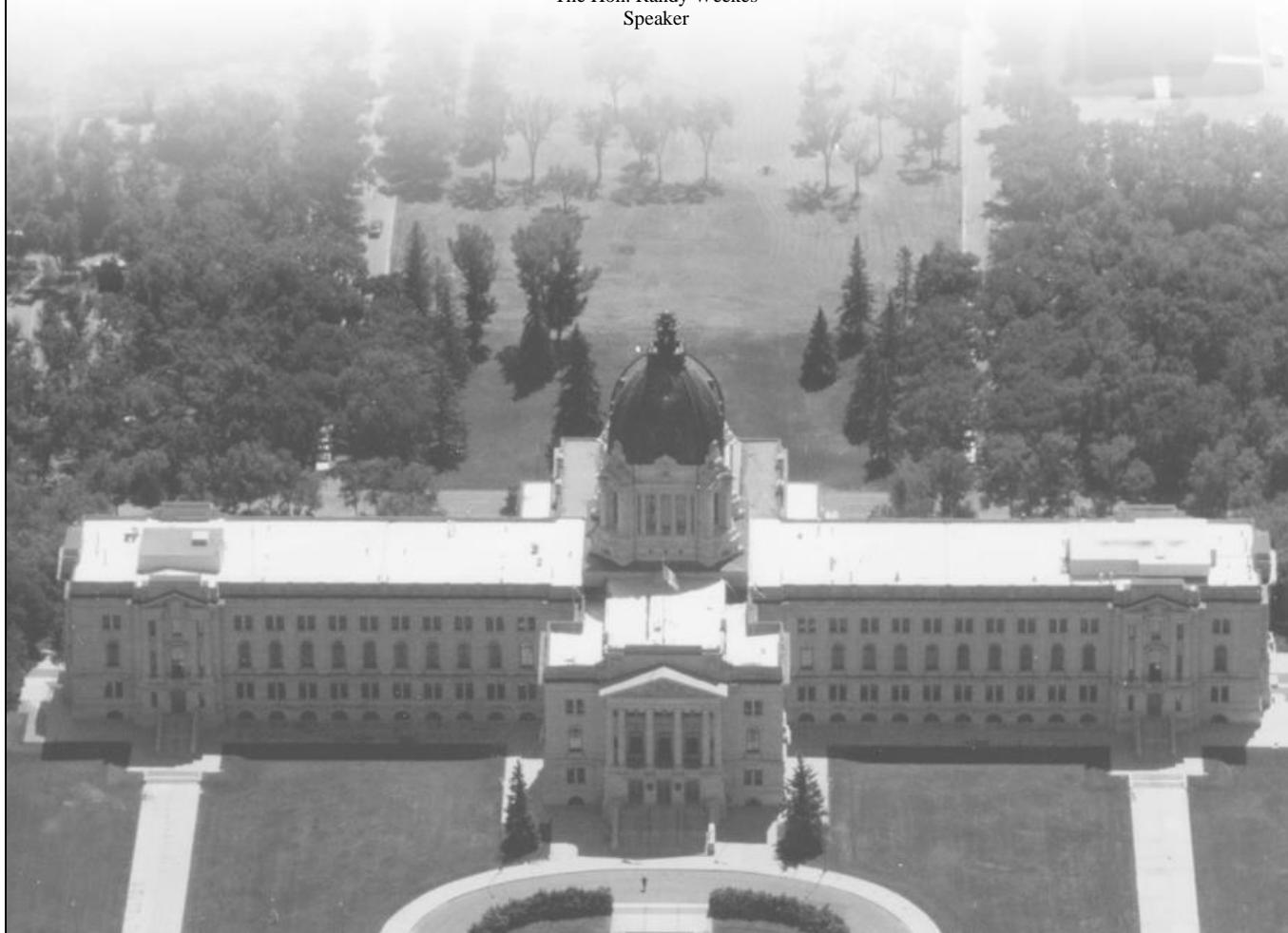
of the

## 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

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<b>Harpauer</b> , Hon. Donna — Humboldt-Watrous (SP)	<b>Teed</b> , Nathaniel — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)
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<b>Jenson</b> , Terry — Martensville-Warman (SP)	<b>Wilson</b> , Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (Ind.)
<b>Kaeding</b> , Warren — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)	<b>Wotherspoon</b> , Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)
<b>Keisig</b> , Travis — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)	<b>Wyant</b> , Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
<b>Kirsch</b> , Delbert — Batoche (SP)	<b>Young</b> , Aleana — Regina University (NDP)
<b>Lambert</b> , Lisa — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)	<b>Young</b> , Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)
<b>Lawrence</b> , Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (Ind.)	

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**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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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, a whole bunch of guests in your gallery representing Access Communications. First I'll just get them to wave as I introduce them: Karen Smith, board Chair; Steven Compton, board member; Lorna Knudson, board member; Leslie Ciz, a board member; Collin Pullar, a board member.

And then from the administrative part of the organization Carmela Haines, president and CEO [chief executive officer]; Wade Peterson, senior manager, technical operations; Tracey Mucha, senior manager, community engagement; Martin Smith, regional manager, northwest district; Fran Moran, community relations manager; Mark Rathwell, corporate communications manager. Darcy Porter, general sales manager, wasn't able to make it here today.

With them are representatives of GSD group: Joel Peterson, principal, and of course Dan D'Autremont, senior associate. Last but not least, Arlie Matisho is commercial relationship manager. Arlie and I go back a long ways. Our families go back 55 years, and you know, we have a long history. His grandpa, Ray, used to own the Texaco bulk and was a big reason that my dad was able to stay in business back 55 years ago, giving him a little bit of leniency with his fuel bill.

Mr. Speaker, many significant contributions the organization makes to our province through connectivity and community development. Access delivers essential communications services to 232 communities and is a proud not-for-profit Saskatchewan-owned co-operative and invests 100 per cent of its earnings back into the community it serves. In fact last year Access Communications Children's Fund surpassed \$3.5 million donated since 1992.

Today they're actively engaged in conversations with, I believe, members opposite as well as government members and different committees to kind of tell their story and advocate for some of the things important to them.

I do commend Access for its 50 years of unwavering commitment to Saskatchewan and its residents. And they are having a reception in 218 at 5 o'clock and everybody's invited to attend in the Assembly. So I ask all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to join with the member opposite and provide a very warm welcome to all the leadership and the guests with Access that have joined

us here today. I want to welcome Karen Smith and her board that are here today, and I want to welcome Carmela Haines and the leadership team that have joined us. We appreciated the meeting here this morning. We look forward to the dialogue later today at the reception.

Most importantly though, to you and your team, we want to say thank you for all you do across Saskatchewan. Certainly you're a vital and important partner around connectivity across this province. You're a very important broadcaster as well with respect to local stories and local content and local sports. I think of my hometown Regina Pats and the exceptional job you do there, as well as that effort to support community in so many ways.

The fact that the Children's Fund donated almost a million dollars this year, Mr. Speaker, speaks volumes. You and your team are involved in so many good projects across this province. I think of the Show N Shine that draws almost 5,000 people together on a beautiful Labour Day Monday here in Regina.

So with respect to the important role in connecting Saskatchewan and all the aspects of community support and development, on behalf of the official opposition, it's my pleasure to welcome you and your respective team. Thank you.

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

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all the members of the Legislative Assembly, I'm delighted to be able to introduce a number of individuals that are seated in the west gallery. Among them, Mr. Speaker, are workers from the Poplar River power station in Coronach.

I'm going to introduce them by name, and when I do, I'd just ask that they give us a wave, Mr. Speaker. Jared Vancuren, electrical supervisor; Jaylee Ingram, project supervisor, joined by her mother, Renee; Boycie Elder, production support specialist; Nicole Kirby, production specialist; Chris Snelling, production support specialist, joined by his wife, Joy; Tyler Hannotte, overhaul manager; and Dalton Giblett, director of the Poplar River power station, joined by his wife, Dana.

Mr. Speaker, these individuals are absolutely essential to the operation of Saskatchewan's largest power station, providing reliable baseload power to Saskatchewan families and the power that we need to live our lives in this province, Mr. Speaker. This was made especially evident by the efforts undertaken by these workers last summer when Poplar River was offline for nearly three months.

In a few moments, Mr. Speaker, we're going to hear a member statement that'll go into a little bit more detail in terms of what happened last summer. But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, as Minister of SaskPower and on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, I want to express my utmost appreciation to these individuals for the work that they did last summer over a number of months, Mr. Speaker, and the work that they do each and every day on behalf of the people of this province. So I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Ms. A. Young:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members, I'd like to join with the minister opposite on behalf of the official opposition and add our appreciation and thanks to all these great folks who've come from Coronach, who put in such great work every single day at the Poplar River station.

You're so key, both to Saskatchewan's economy and to the quality of life that we're all able to enjoy here. And boy, I can't fathom the cleanup, the commitment, and the dedication that you've had to put in to get this station back up and running after the events of last summer.

So on behalf of the official opposition, I want to thank you, welcome you to the legislature and also the SaskPower executive team that I see sitting there behind you. Always wonderful to see you. Thank you again for the work that you do providing, you know, affordable, sustainable, reliable power to the people of this province. So on behalf of the official opposition, I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming these fine folks to this, their legislature.

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

**Hon. Mr. Marit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to rise with the minister in welcoming these fine young men and women to their Legislative Assembly. All of them live in my constituency and work in the community at the power station in Coronach. We had a very nice luncheon earlier today and had a very good discussion about it all. These young men and women are really pillars in that community, and the work that they do is very important.

I know some of them quite personally, Mr. Speaker, as I know some of the young ones up there happened to party a few times with our kids on a few occasions. But I won't mention any names on who they were. But I just want to also reiterate that, what the minister did touch on, during the luncheon we saw pictures of the devastation that happened to that plant, that I don't think anybody in this room can even grasp on what happened there and the work that it took.

There was over 120 large round bales that were destroyed that ended up in that facility, and you can't imagine the mud and the straw and the water that these young folks had to clean up. And some of it was with 5-gallon pails and pitchforks and the likes of that. We saw the pictures and I couldn't believe it myself, Mr. Speaker.

But I just want to thank them, not only on behalf of myself and our family who live in that community and that constituency, but I want to thank them for the work they do for the people of this province in making sure that we have safe, reliable baseload power. So on behalf of myself and all the members here, welcome to your Legislative Assembly and thank you for what you do.

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

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be remiss if I didn't also welcome the members from Access Communications, Carmela and the entire team, the board members and administration, Mr. Speaker. We're very pleased to have them here at the legislature today, and we look forward to their reception later this afternoon.

I do want to — probably my last opportunity to do so — welcome Wade Peterson in particular. I had an opportunity very early in my career, as he was working in the southeast part of the province, to get to know Wade and spend a little bit of time on the golf course with him, Mr. Speaker. And so I just want to, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, welcome the team from Access Communications, and in particular I want to welcome Wade to his Legislative Assembly.

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

**Mr. B. McLeod:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce a great group of grade 8 students from Plainsview elementary school. Now I cannot see them all, I'm sure, because there's 49 here and I think there's got to be some behind me too, if I'm not mistaken. Yes, thank you.

I met with some of them just a little bit earlier today already and just welcome them here to their Legislative Assembly. With them today is Alana Nelson and Carrie Yasinowski. I look forward to conversing with you a little bit more after question period, pictures on the staircase, and a conversation downstairs in the Qu'Appelle Gallery. And ice cream for everybody. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## PRESENTING PETITIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you very much, 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, supported by the Sask opposition last week, all three of these groups continue to support the carbon tax as one of 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 not to collect or remit the carbon tax on home heating in Saskatchewan has led to a drop in inflation; further, that despite the decision not to charge the carbon tax on home heating, Saskatchewan families continue to pay that tax out of pocket at the pumps, the grocery stores, and more.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request 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 impacts on affordability and inflation in Canada.

The below undersigned are residents of Yorkton, Kamsack, and Langenburg. I do so present. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Teed:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be on my feet presenting our petition calling on the Government of Saskatchewan to address the housing crisis in Saskatchewan and calling for more affordable homes and tenant protections.

Mr. Speaker, the undersigned would like to bring to our attention the following: the cost of housing in Saskatchewan has skyrocketed, making it increasingly difficult for many individuals and families in securing stable and affordable housing. Over the past decade homelessness has surged, pushing people onto the streets. Meanwhile the government has made drastic cuts to the housing programs and, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan has wasted 596 million on vacant housing units. Some of these remain uninhabitable because of cuts to the maintenance and renovation budget over the last year.

Mr. Speaker, 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 immediately implement a comprehensive affordable housing strategy aimed at helping individuals and families in securing stable and affordable housing. This strategy must restore the cuts made to the housing portfolio and invest in the development of affordable and low-income housing units. We also urge the government to enforce rental protections for tenants and allocate resources towards the development of second-stage housing and shelter.

Mr. Speaker, the undersigned residents reside in Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

[13:45]

**Ms. Conway:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be on my feet to present a petition I have yet to present. This is a petition calling on this Legislative Assembly to remove lead water lines in Regina.

The undersigned residents of the province wish to bring to the attention of this government that the province of Saskatchewan is responsible for ensuring the safety of drinking water for all Saskatchewan residents. Many citizens of Regina do not have safe drinking water because the pipes that deliver the water to their homes are both old and made of lead, resulting in high concentrations of lead leaching into their drinking water. This situation has unequal impacts on the health of vulnerable people including kids, low-income residents, Indigenous people, seniors, renters, and new Canadians living in Regina's urban core. The province of Saskatchewan administers federal infrastructure funding that is intended for revitalizing core infrastructure, including safe drinking water.

In other words, the signatories of this petition are calling on the Saskatchewan government to step up and address this problem.

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 ensure access to safe drinking water for all Regina residents by providing supports to the city of Regina to replace lead water mains quickly and safely.

The signatories of this petition reside in Regina. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do so present.

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

**Ms. Bowes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on Earth Day to present our petition calling on the government to implement real action on climate change.

The undersigned residents would like to bring to our attention the following: that Saskatchewan, like other jurisdictions, continues to experience the challenges brought on by climate change, severe forest and grassland fires, as well as increasing flooding and drought; that the costs of increased climate change continue to grow through increased crop insurance and provincial disaster assistance program payments; that Saskatchewan is falling behind other jurisdictions on climate change action with no green jobs plan, no plan to tackle GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions, and no incentives for renewable energy; that Saskatchewan has the second-highest per capita greenhouse gas emissions in Canada; and finally that between 2005 and 2003, the Sask Party government failed to reduce Saskatchewan's total GHG emissions.

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 take real action on climate change.

The signatories today reside in Regina. I do so present.

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

### First Nations University of Canada Hosts Spring Celebration Powwow

**Mr. Lemaigre:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my honour along with the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, the Minister of Social Services, and a number of members opposite to attend the 45th annual First Nations University of Canada spring powwow this past Saturday. With over 800 dancers and 20-plus drum groups from all over North America, an Indigenous trade show, and great traditional food, fun was had by one and all.

The Spring Celebration Powwow is the largest powwow in Western Canada and the longest standing in Canada that typically draws in more than 8,000 people to the community. We are grateful to the First Nations University of Canada powwow

committee who organized this event to allow people to be able to come together again as a community, to hear the drums, the song, and the dancing.

Mr. Speaker, this event was a great example of how Indigenous people are forging a path ahead for their communities in reconciliation. Our government remains committed to meaningful reconciliation with our First Nations, northern, Métis, and Indigenous partners.

Mr. Speaker, our thanks to the organizing committee, including committee chairwoman Cherish Jean-Baptiste, who put in an amazing event. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **New Democratic Party Affirms Environmental Commitment on Earth Day**

**Mr. Clarke:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to recognize Earth Day. Earth Day is an opportunity for us as Saskatchewan New Democrats to reaffirm our commitment to ensuring Saskatchewan's natural landscapes and ecosystems are protected, our water and air is kept clean and pristine, and our flora and fauna are safeguarded.

Saskatchewan, alongside the rest of the world, Mr. Speaker, faces two significant threats: climate change and the loss of biodiversity. We are firmly committed to reducing emissions in Saskatchewan through a rapid expansion of renewable electricity generation, a robust energy retrofit program, and collaborating with all stakeholders to maximize creative and innovative ideas to address climate change.

We are also committed to implementing a wetland conservation policy that would ensure wetlands are protected, which is good for biodiversity, good for sequestering carbon, and for mitigating flooding.

When it comes to native prairie, Mr. Speaker, one of the world's most endangered ecosystems with less than 10 per cent remaining in Saskatchewan, we know that protecting ranching culture in this province ensures healthy, vibrant prairie grasslands. Ranchers are fantastic stewards of the land, and we would work hand in hand with them and other stakeholders to protect this endangered ecosystem through collaboration and respect.

Mr. Speaker, New Democrats have a history of caring about the environment, and any future NDP government will continue this tradition. That's a promise.

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

#### **Yorkton Chamber of Commerce Recognizes Business Leaders**

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Mr. Speaker, on April 17th I attended the 2024 Yorkton Chamber of Commerce Celebrate Success Business Awards banquet at St. Mary's hall, sponsored by Baker Tilly, Cornerstone Credit Union, and BDC [Business Development Bank of Canada] financial.

The first excellence awards were presented in 1998 in recognition of contributions made by businesses and organizations in and around our community. As always, the church hall staff provided an amazing Ukrainian-themed meal enjoyed by the capacity crowd. I was honoured to represent the government and Minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] to present the Community Merit awards, sponsored by SaskTel, to Credence Construction Ice Fishing for Charity, Saskatchewan Abilities Yorkton, and Society for the Involvement of Good Neighbours.

Other award winners were personal and aesthetics: Refresh Massage Studio and Spa. Relax, eat, drink: Grumpy's Grill. Trades and skilled labour: New Outlook Refrigeration. Ag production: S&D Solonenko Farms. Health and wellness: The Bentley Yorkton. Property restoration: Moda health. Retail and consumer: RCM Outdoors.

Awards of excellence went to Key Auto, Mark's Yorkton; and Triple A Directional Drilling. Young entrepreneur: Leighton Hull of Anything Trackhoe service. Woman entrepreneur: Adelle Sherring of Sherring Optical. Distinguished entrepreneur: Laurie Renton. People's choice: Maple Ag and Outdoor. Small business of the year: Pumphouse Athletic Club. And large business of the year: Credence Construction.

Mr. Speaker, many recipients recognized all businesses in our communities as winners. Thank you to the chamber and many contributing sponsors and individuals for hosting this flagship event to recognize, thank, and congratulate businesses and organizations contributing so mightily to our community and our province.

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

#### **Cost of Living and Standard of Living in Saskatchewan**

**Ms. A. Young:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now we have repeatedly pointed out the numerous ways that this tired and out-of-touch government is failing the people of Saskatchewan — increases to power rates, telephone rates, provincial PST [provincial sales tax]; education property tax increases; fee increases; and inflation.

Now we have provided real-world solutions that this government could implement tomorrow to help people during a generational cost-of-living crisis. Well, Mr. Speaker, if they won't acknowledge the problem from the cost side of the ledger, will they acknowledge it from the income side?

Now, Mr. Speaker, they look confused so a little economics 101 for the members opposite. Under this Premier our standard of living in Saskatchewan has fallen from \$65,977 to \$63,654. On average the standard of living in our province has fallen by \$2,323. No wonder people feel poor, Mr. Speaker. Costs are increasing and our standard of living has fallen.

This is the first time since the Great Depression that a premier has presided over a drop in the standard of living for Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, not even the infamous Grant Devine managed that. We've said it before and we'll say again: Saskatchewan people cannot afford another Sask Party

government.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

### Employees Demonstrate Extraordinary Efforts at Poplar River Power Station

**Mr. Keisig:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In June of last year, a torrential rainstorm in the Coronach area caused mud, straw, and debris to flood into SaskPower's Poplar River power station, damaging equipment and completely filling the 47-foot-deep concrete well that the plant relies on for cooling water. The power plant was brought offline and a staggering amount of work was required to get Poplar River back online after this unforeseen event.

While machinery on the main floor helped clear some of the mess, the only access to the well was through a small hatch just big enough for one person. The only solution was to send employees down into the well to scoop up debris with shovels, load it into barrels, and then hoist them out with a crane one at a time. This was a truly Herculean effort.

It took almost three months of round-the-clock work by staff at the plant to restore service, an estimated 4,900 hours of work. When all was said and done, the equivalent of 128 round bales of hay was removed from the plant, including 88 from the pumphouse alone. Most importantly, this work was done with the utmost care and there were no lost time injuries during the recovery effort.

Please join me in thanking everyone who worked day and night to get the plant back online and generating the reliable baseload power that Saskatchewan families need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Positive Economic Indicators in Saskatchewan

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday we received more great news about Saskatchewan's growing economy. The province's building construction investment in February saw an increase of 19.4 per cent year over year. This brings the total value of building construction to \$401 million in February 2024. These impressive figures are in addition to the 96.2 per cent month-over-month increase in the value of building permits for February.

But this should be no surprise. In 2023 Saskatchewan's private capital investment was increased to \$12.4 billion, up 24.6 per cent year over year, ranking second in the nation. Saskatchewan is expected to lead the nation in private capital investment in 2024, increasing by another 14.4 per cent.

We know this news isn't what the NDP opposition likes to hear. They prefer to talk down Saskatchewan's economy and drive away investment. These same views led to their abysmal record on job creation, population growth, and capital investment during their time in government. Fortunately that's no longer the case, Mr. Speaker. There are more jobs, more opportunities, and more

people choosing to call Saskatchewan home than ever before. Our government will continue to grow our economy and build a bright future for all Saskatchewan people.

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

### Opposition Position on Carbon Tax

**Mr. Jenson:** — Mr. Speaker, all session the NDP leader has been desperately trying to convince voters that they don't support the Trudeau-Singh carbon tax, but her actions don't match her words. Last week she flew to a meeting in Ottawa to plot strategy to get Trudeau and Singh re-elected. You know who else was at that meeting, Mr. Speaker? Trudeau and Singh.

Now did she tell Jagmeet Singh to vote against the budget, a budget that still includes a carbon tax? I'm pretty sure she didn't, Mr. Speaker. And even if she did, it was just for show because she knows full well Jagmeet Singh will never ever disobey his boss, Justin Trudeau.

Mr. Speaker, it's now clear whose side the NDP is on, and it's not Saskatchewan's. They support the carbon tax. Their leader flies to a meeting in Ottawa to help him get re-elected. The NDP is Trudeau's choice for Saskatchewan. Trudeau wants a government he can control like he controls Jagmeet Singh and the federal NDP. That's exactly what an NDP government here would be. A vote for the NDP is a vote for Trudeau.

But the good news is, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people will never let Trudeau control Saskatchewan like he controls the NDP.

### QUESTION PERIOD

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

#### Federal Carbon Tax and Relationship with Federal Government

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, I had some great meetings in Ottawa. I met with Saskatchewan health care workers, those who work in uranium, those who work in oil and gas — all who were all, Mr. Speaker, being failed by this tired and out-of-touch government.

And yes, Mr. Speaker, I met with Jagmeet Singh and members of the federal government. And I let them know that we oppose the carbon tax, that the home heating carve-out is unfair, and that we need a better deal on equalization. And I reached out to the Conservatives too, Mr. Speaker, but they couldn't make the time. And I made it clear where we disagreed.

Mr. Speaker, I also made it clear that where we can find common ground, Saskatchewan New Democrats will work to get a deal, whether that's a school lunch program, whether it's diabetes and contraception coverage, Mr. Speaker, or when it comes to leaving federal dollars on the table. Saskatchewan people expect their government to lead no matter who's in power in Ottawa. They expect them to act.

Mr. Speaker, when will we see this Premier act, cut the fuel tax, and offer Saskatchewan people some relief that they need?

[14:00]

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

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Mr. Speaker, I welcome the Leader of the Opposition back as well as other members that attended this meeting, Mr. Speaker. Maybe the reason they weren't able to meet with the Conservatives at this labour meeting, Mr. Speaker, is they weren't invited. Mr. Speaker, the title of the labour meeting was "Labour reps to discuss election strategy." Mr. Speaker, it was publicly called a call to arms to plot strategy ahead of the federal election vote, Mr. Speaker, and to actively discuss election strategy.

So, Mr. Speaker, if we can agree on the fact that one of the highest inflationary causes that we have in Canada today is the dreaded carbon tax, which is a tax on everything for everyone, Mr. Speaker. And if we can agree on the fact that the federal Liberal minority-NDP administration is not going to remove that, Mr. Speaker, it is going to take a change in government in order for that to happen. So why then, Mr. Speaker, would the opposition members not support Saskatchewan families by attending a meeting that is going to keep that very minority administration in space, Mr. Speaker?

We often hear of outcomes that are coming back from meetings that we may attend abroad, Mr. Speaker, of which are many when it comes to the economic improvement of our province, Mr. Speaker. Outside of, Mr. Speaker, the NDP bringing back an election strategy on how to keep Justin Trudeau in power, what outcomes did they bring back from Ottawa?

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

#### Government Support for Education and Meeting with Parent

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, the Premier should know that Saskatchewan people expect more than huffing and puffing from their leaders. They expect their leaders to lead. They expect them to say no when the feds are on the wrong track, Mr. Speaker, but they expect them to get a deal done when there are federal dollars on the table that could benefit Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker. And that is exactly the job that I was doing last week in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

It is also the job of leaders to set the tone for their entire team. And it has become painfully clear that this Premier has lost control of his team, from the petulant House Leader to the Education minister who has done so much damage to the education sector in our province. A minister who asked a grieving mother, what do they want from me, my first-born?

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier do the right thing, and will he fire his Education minister?

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

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Mr. Speaker, I think first and foremost, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government, Mr. Speaker, I would offer my condolences and our thoughts to Taya Thomas, who lost her daughter Mayelle this past year, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to the comments that were made by the Education minister when he met with Taya after one of the sessions last week, I would say and agree with the Minister of Education when he says he used a, you know, selected a very poor choice of words, Mr. Speaker. He made a terrible mistake in that choice of words. He's apologized for that mistake, I understand, privately, Mr. Speaker. He's apologized on the floor of this Assembly and apologized publicly in the rotunda, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to the question that the Leader of the Opposition has, Mr. Speaker, in light of what is a very poor . . . in spite of what was a very poor choice of words by the Education minister, of which he apologized for, there is much that this Education minister is doing that is in the best interests of students and our classrooms and our teachers across the province, Mr. Speaker. And he retains the full confidence of myself, the full confidence of his cabinet, and the full confidence of his caucus, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, I've been around public education for a long time, from being elected as a school board trustee in 2009 to being elected here into this Assembly and serving as the Education critic. And I have seen a lot of ministers in that time, Mr. Speaker, some better than others.

But this is without a doubt the worst minister that we've seen yet, and he has shown time and again through his actions that he is not fit for this job. What does it say about that Premier's leadership and his judgment that he is keeping that minister in his place?

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

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Mr. Speaker, I again would say in the Education minister's admittedly poor choice of words — of which he has apologized for privately, publicly, a number of times — that this is a minister that has advocated, whether it be in caucus, whether it be in cabinet, whether it be at the treasury board level, Mr. Speaker, for the largest operational funding that the education sector has ever received in the history of the province. Not just the level of funding, Mr. Speaker, but the largest increase in operational funding that our school divisions, as the Leader of the Opposition indicated she has served with, has ever received.

That included a significant increase as well for our supports that are going directly into the classroom, and it also included a significant increase on the capital builds, Mr. Speaker, with nine new schools being built across the province. That's adding to the 65 that are in process. All said, between new capital builds and major renovations, I believe we're at 102 total here in the province, Mr. Speaker.

So this is an Education minister, as I said, that has apologized for a poor choice of words last week but continues to advocate to engage with all involved in the sector, Mr. Speaker, and to advocate and to really find his way through ensuring that there is funding that is flowing into our classrooms to support our students' learning environment.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, it speaks volumes about that Premier's judgment that he continues to keep that Education minister in his post.

More than a poor choice of words, this is a poor choice for an Education minister. One, Mr. Speaker, who on his first day on the job said that every MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] in that government had heard about the need for a pronoun policy. Mr. Speaker, not five minutes later that same minister told reporters that that wasn't true.

This is a minister who ran a bad-faith campaign, a billboard campaign against teachers before they even got to the table, and one who has destroyed trust in the education sector. And the only thing that could turn that around is for that minister to no longer hold that post. Why doesn't the Premier have the courage to do that today?

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

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Again, Mr. Speaker, in spite of what is a self-admitted poor choice of words, Mr. Speaker, of which the Minister of Education has apologized for, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is in many ways stating a number of the initiatives that this Education minister has undertaken that are really relevant and, I think, supportive of the vast majority of Saskatchewan parents and Saskatchewan families' views.

Most notably among that, Mr. Speaker, is the parental bill of rights that was passed on the floor of this Assembly, ensuring that parents have the ability to be involved in their child's school, classroom, and education, one that has been opposed by the members opposite and, I would say, would likely be removed or retracted by the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

You add to that the record increase in operational funding, the addition of nine new schools that are being built, Mr. Speaker. And to an earlier question on working with the federal government, working very closely with the federal government in the areas of early learning and child care, with over \$408 million that's been transitioned . . . It's been transitioned, Mr. Speaker. I think we were the, if I'm not mistaken, the third province to make an agreement with the federal government in this space to support Saskatchewan families, Mr. Speaker.

And so this Education minister does retain the full confidence of myself, the cabinet in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and I would say the caucus as well.

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

**Mr. Love:** — Mr. Speaker, this failing Minister of Education has got to go. On day one, on day one in his new job, he told reporters that every single member of the government caucus had taken a call about the pronoun policy. Minutes later the Minister of Health then told reporters that that was not true. Later he said he'd received tens of thousands of emails about the need for the pronoun policy in just a few days. The real number — 18. This minister has shown that he does not have what it takes to stay in his role.

If the Premier won't fire him, why won't he do the right thing

and resign today?

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

**Hon. Mr. Cockrill:** — Mr. Speaker, when it comes to standing up for the parents of this province and ensuring that parents have a role in their children's lives, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that will always stand behind that. I am a minister that will always stand behind, Mr. Speaker, making sure that parents can be involved in their children's life.

On day one on the job I indicated to the media, Mr. Speaker, that every MLA have heard from constituents in regards to concerns around parental involvement, Mr. Speaker. That is why our government moved forward with Bill 137 in the fall, Mr. Speaker, and passed that bill in this House despite the opposition from the NDP, again to ensure that parents can be involved in their children's education in a whole variety of ways, Mr. Speaker.

Again this is a government, this is a premier, this is a minister, Mr. Speaker, that will always stand behind parents being involved in their children's lives.

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

**Mr. Love:** — He didn't stand behind it when he voted against parental engagement right here in this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, under this government's watch we've seen cuts and underfunding in our public schools. While under this minister we've seen increases to private education. Under this minister we've seen the longest teacher job action in Saskatchewan's history.

We see all that failure followed up with personal attacks, a billboard campaign, and nothing but smarmy disdain from the current Minister of Education. Parents, teachers, and students deserve so much better. When will the minister face the music and resign?

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

**Hon. Mr. Cockrill:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again I can tell the members opposite, I can tell the House what I've heard from parents and teachers all around the province, Mr. Speaker, is that parents want to be involved in their children's lives, involved in what's happening at school, whether that's a Catholic school, a public school, a francophone school, or an independent school around the province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the member opposite: would he repeal Bill 137?

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

**Mr. Love:** — Absolutely, we'd build a parental engagement strategy to get parents involved in education. Absolutely.

Mr. Speaker, this minister has got to go. He has destroyed trust in the sector, and all of the problems that existed before he showed up have only gotten worse during his time. Now if he

won't resign because he's failing as a minister, he should resign for failing to apologize to Taya Thomas, the grieving mother who he told, "What do they want me to do, give up my first-born child?" How does the minister think he can stay in his role after such a failure in leadership?

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

**Hon. Mr. Cockrill:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said on the floor of this Assembly last week, Mr. Speaker, it was a poor choice of words on my part, Mr. Speaker. When I met with Ms. Thomas last week, I had the opportunity to apologize for my poor choice of words directly to her in our meeting, Mr. Speaker. I apologized on the floor of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

But when it comes to addressing the needs of the sector, Mr. Speaker, that member opposite says things have gotten worse, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what we have now that we didn't have a year ago. We have a multi-year funding agreement to deal with classroom support funding for all 27 school divisions, again, Mr. Speaker, something that school divisions have been asking for several years, something that this government was able to deliver on in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker. Not only do we have predictability over the next four years, Mr. Speaker, but we also have 14 per cent increase in classroom supports funding.

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

### Contract Nurses and Health Care Staffing

**Mr. Clarke:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This tired and out-of-touch government just doesn't care anymore. They don't care about our kids, they don't care about the most vulnerable, and they certainly don't care about the 49 nurses that wrote to the minister raising the alarm over our overreliance on contract nurses.

Mr. Speaker, we learned in committee a couple of weeks ago that they have spent \$59 million on contract nurses last year. And of course they wouldn't tell us how much they plan to spend this year, but SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] is projecting that it'll be nearly \$70 million. How does the minister justify spending \$59 million on contract nurses?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we discussed last week, when necessary, the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] utilizes contract nursing resources to be able to balance temporary service disruptions, Mr. Speaker. Again, as we talked about in committee, the reasoning, the rationale for that, to make sure that we can provide for coverage in these areas, and temporarily doing that so that the nurses do have the ability to take vacation time or if they happen to phone in sick, Mr. Speaker.

Now as I've said before, and I'll say it again here today in the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to work through the SHA to make sure that we keep filling vacancies, training more health care workers, hiring more health care workers as part of our HHR [health human resources] action plan, and reduce the

overall reliance on contract nurses in this province in the months and years ahead, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Clarke:** — Mr. Speaker, these contract nurses were supposed to be a temporary, fill-in-the-gap solution, but the numbers show that they have become a baked-in part of this government's staffing plan. We've gone from spending a couple of million dollars a year to nearly \$70 million just this year.

[14:15]

It is clear that this government's human health resource plan isn't working. We know that. The nurses at the emergency room at St. Paul's Hospital know that. Will the minister admit today that his plan isn't working and finally, finally say yes to SUN and their nursing task force idea?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the member opposite, he doesn't want to hear it, but the health human resources action plan, it is working. It is working in our cities. It's working in our rural communities, Mr. Speaker, \$140 million invested into this action plan creating new permanent, full-time positions across Saskatchewan in many rural communities. New hires are happening as a result of that, Mr. Speaker, and that also includes work that continues to be done filling vacancies that we have in our urban centres as well, Mr. Speaker.

I can report to the member opposite that in the St. Paul's situation — I've seen the letter; I've had the opportunity to meet with the nurses there directly and talk to them on a regular basis — that five nurses were hired in the emergency department in January, Mr. Speaker, and they're now able to work fully and independently. Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, two more RNs [registered nurse] started in March. They're expected to work independently by the end of May.

That's the list of some of the results that are happening when it comes to our HHR action plan. More to come, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Clarke:** — Mr. Speaker, \$59 million last year; on track for \$70 million this year. That's almost \$300,000 per nurse, triple what a typical in-house nurse is paid. I'll read what the nurses said to that minister in the letter: "This significant disparity in perceived value leaves the permanent staff feeling frustrated."

When staff are feeling frustrated and undervalued, Mr. Speaker, they leave. When will we see an actual retention plan, one that ensures that we don't lose any more nurses?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Retention is an important part of this government's strategy, in addition to the recruitment and the retaining of health care workers, training of

health care workers, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we do have the necessary staff to be able to fill these vacancies and continue to build the health care workforce, Mr. Speaker.

We have a growing province and growing demands on the health care system. That's why we're adding more beds across the system, Mr. Speaker, hiring more staff so that we have more services for people right across this province, Mr. Speaker.

Over the next two weeks, St. Paul's Hospital will be interviewing 12 RNs to fill the vacancies, which is a good sign, Mr. Speaker, that there are nurses wanting to work in this department. That will reduce the reliance on contract nurses, Mr. Speaker, and that work is going to continue.

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

### Provision of Surgical Procedures and Contract with Private Company

**Ms. Conway:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Instead of taking real action on the worst-in-the-country wait times on knee and hip surgeries, this government has handed a \$6 million sweetheart deal to an out-of-province donor, a donor whose lobbyist was the Sask Party's own Finance minister, Kevin Doherty.

Saskatchewan people want answers, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: did Kevin Doherty lobby him on the issue of surgical backlog either in his role as Minister of Health or in his previous role as minister of Rural and Remote Health? Yes or no?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite continues to ask the same questions that she had last week, Mr. Speaker. It gives me an opportunity to talk about our surgical initiatives in this province: \$670 million into surgical initiatives in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

And one thing that our government is doing is pursuing all options when it comes to accessing and improving access to joint replacement surgery, Mr. Speaker. Since 2010, through privately operated, publicly funded surgical centres in this province and also through initiatives such as this, we have been able to provide 161,000 surgeries, Mr. Speaker, since 2010.

Mr. Speaker, as I said previously, it's important that we are giving long waiters on the surgical wait-list options to be able to get the surgeries they need. And that's what we're going to continue to do, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Conway:** — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I've asked some of these questions before. The problem is the answers keep changing, and I think just right there we didn't get an answer at all.

This is the minister who said that there was an RFP [request for proposal], an open and transparent process, and then he said there wasn't. A week ago he was claiming that he probably hadn't even met with Kevin Doherty. Then he acknowledged he did, but it

was about something else but he can't remember entirely what it was, Mr. Speaker.

So I'll ask another question about this, Mr. Speaker. Did the Health minister meet with Kevin Doherty either in his role as Health minister or previously as minister of Rural and Remote Health on the surgical backlog? Yes or no?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member for Elphinstone-Centre, she keeps her question sheets from last week and she scribbles a few different words on it, tries to change it up. And then she can't be patient enough to wait for an answer because she just sits there from across the back there, Mr. Speaker, and yells across the way. That's how she conducts herself, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to make significant investments into these initiatives, and we meet with many people. As I've said in this Chamber and as I've said out in the rotunda as well, we meet with many people, Mr. Speaker.

As an example, last fall a number of us on this side of the House and the other side of the House also met with the former NDP MLA for Saskatoon Riversdale, Danielle Chartier. And Saskatoon Community Clinic, they hosted a lobby night for MLAs, Mr. Speaker, alongside other well-known NDP members Frank Quennell and Sheri Benson. Do they not want us meeting with the Saskatoon Community Clinic, Mr. Speaker?

I guess that's the question I would like to ask that member opposite, is who would she meet with and who wouldn't she meet with, Mr. Speaker?

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

**Ms. Conway:** — Except he's the minister, Mr. Speaker, and he's so far failed to answer a very basic yes-or-no question. And you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm getting kind of worried about the Health minister. I'm worried about his memory. He's really struggling, but don't worry, I can help him narrow it down. Kevin Doherty only lobbies the Ministry of Health on behalf of three organizations. One is an ambulance company, the other provides dementia care for seniors, and one is a private surgical provider in Alberta.

So again, we haven't heard an answer to this question. Did he meet with Kevin Doherty either in his current role as Minister of Health or before, as minister of Rural and Remote Health? Yes or no?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I answered the question last week and said yes, I did meet with that group as recently as two or three weeks ago, with Medavie as an example, Mr. Speaker. So to help the member opposite's memory, just to remind her again, this would be on *Hansard* and it would be in the media as well, Mr. Speaker. Again I've answered that question.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would just say this. We're going to continue to make record investments into health care. And the member opposite said something to the effect as, well you're the minister, you should know these things. I can tell you what, Mr. Speaker. What the people of this province will never do is make her the minister of anything, Mr. Speaker. They made that change in 2007 and reiterated it in 2011, 2016, 2020. We'll see what happens in October of 2024, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Overdose Deaths and Treatment for Addictions

**Ms. Bowes:** — Mr. Speaker, every year our province sets a new record for overdose deaths with more than one person dying of overdose every single day in this province. This government knows this, yet they cut supports and services in our communities that save lives.

In Alberta, similar addictions policies have seen a stark increase in the rate of overdose deaths. In that province, overdose deaths have risen by 25 per cent, Mr. Speaker. How many families have to lose their loved ones to this crisis before the minister will realize that his plan isn't working?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Hon. Mr. T. McLeod:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, no illicit drugs are safe. No illicit drugs are safe. There is no safe use of an illicit drug, and I know the members opposite want to desperately convince the communities across Saskatchewan that there is somehow some safe use of an illicit drug. They want to flood our streets with needles and dirty crack pipes, Mr. Speaker, but that is not the strategy of this government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on treatment and recovery to help the individuals who need the supports necessary to overcome addiction, and that's why we are expanding addiction treatment spaces. We're making it easier for individuals to access those spaces, and we are wrapping the supports that they need to recover around them so that they can live healthy lives in recovery. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

#### ADJOURNED DEBATES

#### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 156

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that **Bill No. 156 — The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2024** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Teed:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour

to be on my feet today here entering into adjourned debates on Bill No. 156, *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2024*. You know, Mr. Speaker, we've spoken about budget bills — bills that come out after the budget to fulfill promises made in the budget, make changes to tax codes and the like. And, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 156 is one of those bills.

This is an important bill before our Chamber today. It is a bill that looks to ensure that anyone in this province who wants to sell tobacco products must license to sell those tobacco products. And, Mr. Speaker, it was a little bit surprising to me realizing that in Saskatchewan anyone can open up a shop and sell tobacco products, can sell cigarettes, Mr. Speaker, without any government oversight, any licence.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan we have had, as an example, liquor retailing in the province had been maintained by a monopoly for some time and has recently changed. And you have to have a licence to sell liquor. And so, Mr. Speaker, it was quite surprising to me to see that folks in this province could sell tobacco products without that oversight, without ensuring that they're following the rules. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm specifically thinking about rules as it pertains to the access of tobacco by young people.

Most recently we have seen some fantastic advocacy work by Youth4Change, an organization involved with the Heart and Stroke Foundation here in Saskatchewan who's been doing absolutely amazing work to ensure that their cohort of youth — folks that are going through the school system right now — won't be pressured, won't be coerced into becoming addicted to tobacco products. Because what we've seen with vaping products, these are products that are given explanations like "unicorn" and "bubble gum" and all sorts of flavours that are meant and advertised towards children. And so with Youth4Change and the Heart and Stroke Foundation working on these, we did see that change here in Saskatchewan. We changed the legal age from 18 to 19 for all those tobacco products so that we wouldn't see folks who might be 18 in high school able to access tobacco products and able to access those products to share with some of their younger cohort.

Mr. Speaker, during my short time as a teacher one of the biggest challenges we had was kids using vape products in the bathrooms, in the school grounds, Mr. Speaker. These are terribly addicting products that are designed to hook them in on the tobacco train. And it's not a far shot, you know. Smoking cigarettes and tobacco products, we know about the health concerns, Mr. Speaker. We need to make sure that we are working to ensure that our youth aren't accessing these products.

And so, Mr. Speaker, coming to Bill No. 156, this is an important, important piece of legislation that will ensure that anyone who is selling tobacco products will need to register with the government. We've been told that these licences will be free. I'm sure there'll be a time period wherein businesses will need to comply. I'm hoping that we'll see government work with those retailers around the province to ensure that they have the information needed.

But, Mr. Speaker, I don't think this is a far-off situation. We've already seen regulations about the sale of tobacco change in our grocery stores which have pharmacies within them. They've

been made to . . . You know, one example is our Superstores. We have a c·shop at the Superstore because they have pharmacies within them. And so the sale of tobacco needs to be moved out, put into a separate location. We've seen packaging requirements made. We've seen products having to be hidden.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of ways that we can continue to protect young people from addiction, and when it comes to tobacco we know that those young people have the adverse effects if they start to use these products. And so I'm very happy to see legislation brought forward to ensure that we are cinching up some of the areas of tobacco resale.

Mr. Speaker, another area we've been hearing concerns from health care providers is pouch tobacco, another example of a fairly accessible product, you know, easy to get involved with. Sometimes they have flavours or some people are using them just, you know, for recreation. Another product that is just a little bit too accessible. So we're hearing about that from health care providers, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very happy to see the government make these changes.

[14:30]

You know, on the doorsteps I do hear, you know, what is the official opposition doing? Do you guys work together, and do you work together on these things? Do you vote unanimously? I want to see my government, I want to see them work with . . . And it should be the same across the board. You know, Mr. Speaker, people ask on the doorstep, why doesn't the government reach those olive branches out? Why don't you guys work together?

Mr. Speaker, this is an example of an area where as legislatures we are united behind ensuring that we have these regulations in place to ensure that children and youth are not being able to access tobacco products. And so you know, Mr. Speaker, I know that we'll see more questions fielded in committee. We will have more. We will engage with more stakeholders. I'm sure the critic has been doing that work.

And so, Mr. Speaker, at this time I'm happy to put these comments on the record and I am very happy to see this bill moved on to the next stage.

**The Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the minister that Bill No. 156 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — Second reading of this bill.

**The Speaker:** — To which committee shall this bill be committed? I recognize the Government Deputy House Leader.

**Hon. Ms. Carr:** — I designate this bill to be committed to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

**The Speaker:** — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

### Bill No. 157

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that **Bill No. 157 — The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2024** be now read a second time.]

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

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and enter into the debate on Bill No. 157, *The Income Tax Amendment Act*. I'm going to be keeping my remarks fairly short today.

Now what I understand from this legislation and the budget is that this bill will maintain the small-business tax rate at 1 per cent for another year with the restoration date of July 1st, 2025, Mr. Speaker. Welcome news from the small-business community of Saskatchewan, who we've heard quite a bit from lately.

They're really struggling right now. We're seeing local businesses closing up shop throughout the province. Not good news to hear for the economy of Saskatchewan. Not good news to hear for local entrepreneurs. And it would have been better news for those folks if we would have seen some PST rollbacks that this government implemented a few years ago that are really hurting small businesses in this province. But sadly we didn't see that this time around, Mr. Speaker.

I know my colleagues have had the opportunity to enter in some remarks on this legislation, and the critic is looking forward to asking some tough questions of the officials at committee. So at this point I'm prepared to allow this bill to move on to its next stage.

**The Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the minister that Bill No. 157 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — Second reading of this bill.

**The Speaker:** — To which committee shall this bill be committed? I recognize the Government Deputy House Leader.

**Hon. Ms. Carr:** — I designate this bill be committed to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

**The Speaker:** — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

### Bill No. 159

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that **Bill No. 159 — The Revenue and Financial Services Amendment Act, 2024** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Clarke:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be up on my feet to enter into debate on Bill No. 158, *The Saskatchewan Commercial Innovation Incentive (Patent Box) Amendment Act, 2024*. Really, summarizing the bill, it is just extending the tax credit from seven years to eight years.

You know, here's another example of something that the Sask Party has taken and hasn't really got the job done. This is a tax credit that's good in theory, but as far as we understand, no one has ever claimed this tax credit, so peculiar to see it extending. Of course those of us on this side of the House support small business in Saskatchewan, support those businesses that do important things and are really the backbone of the Saskatchewan economy. It would be exciting to see . . .

**The Speaker:** — I just want to correct something. You should be speaking to 159, not 158. Have you got 159? We'll speak to 159, then we'll come back to 158.

**Mr. Clarke:** — My apologies for getting it wrong there. I will enter into debate on No. 159. And I have already put words on the record for this bill, so I will allow the bill to continue to committee. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the minister that Bill No. 159 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order.

**Deputy Clerk:** — Second reading of this bill.

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. To which committee shall the bill be committed? I recognize the Government Deputy House Leader.

**Hon. Ms. Carr:** — I designate this bill be committed to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

**The Speaker:** — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

### Bill No. 158

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. J. Harrison that **Bill No. 158 — The Saskatchewan Commercial Innovation Incentive (Patent Box) Amendment Act, 2024** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Clarke:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to be entering in on a discussion on Bill 158 here, *The Saskatchewan Commercial Innovation Incentive (Patent Box) Amendment Act, 2024*. It's my understanding that my previous comments will not

be on the record so . . . They'll be on there still? Okay. So I will just speak to it real quick. This is a good day, Mr. Speaker. I'm learning lots.

**An Hon. Member:** — It's a great day in Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Clarke:** — It is. All right. So we are moving the tax credit from seven years to eight years. In theory a great idea to have this tax credit, Mr. Speaker, but again we've seen the mishandling of this file from the Sask Party government who, as far as we understand, have not had a single applicant get approved for this. From as far as we understand, the process to access this tax credit is very long, cumbersome, and complex so probably, you know, a lot of red tape that businesses, small businesses in this province, you know, have trouble maybe navigating or it isn't worth their time perhaps.

We look forward to hearing more about this from committee when our critic has time to ask some of those questions. But for now, Mr. Speaker, I will move to adjourn debate on Bill 158. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — The member has moved to adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

### Bill No. 160

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. J. Harrison that **Bill No. 160 — The Immigration Services Act** be now read a second time.]

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

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — Miigwich, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter my remarks on Bill No. 160, *The Immigration Services Act*. My understanding of this bill is that the summary of it is anyone recruiting foreign workers must have a licence unless they're doing it for free or for a government school; and employers can't recruit without certification of registration; and licences or certificates can be denied or revoked on the grounds of non-compliance, financial insecurity, illegal predatory conduct.

And of course recruiters, consultants, employees cannot lie about the job, threaten the worker, their family, or whistle-blowers. And also they can't keep the worker's passport, charge wages on the worker for getting them a job, or force a worker to go through a recruiter. And contracts have to be clear and understandable to workers even if they don't speak the language.

And the ministry has full investigation powers and penalties. I guess guilty individuals could pay up to 75,000 or up to two years in prison. And guilty corporations will pay up to 1.25 million, and one charge for each foreign national affected. You know, it's really good that when we think of employees and those foreign workers and those that come to our country and our province are protected.

You know, I think about the work I've done in the health sector, where many of the folks that I've worked with as a primary health facilitator working with internationally trained workers, when they would come to Canada often their credentials weren't recognized in this province and they had to take extra training. And that was really sad because many, many talented, well-educated folks that came from other countries to work here had big dreams, dreams of utilizing their skill sets and to contribute here in the province.

And the folks that I was working with and dealing with often felt they weren't given the information, you know, the information when they came from other countries to come and work here in Saskatchewan. And that was very evident in the work that I did regarding health. And also how many people that I've listened to and heard in my previous work, working in the health sector, of foreign workers being taken advantage of, you know. And I don't know how it was in Saskatchewan, but I've heard stories here in other provinces where they were threatened with deportation if they got sick for whatever reason.

So it's really good to see that there's legislation that is being created to put some safeguards in place and to be more fair to the foreign workers. And it would be also interesting to know what measures are in place to ensure that there is actual fairness for foreign workers here in this province that want to work in terms of health benefits, being able to have English as their second language offered to them in a way that's accommodating them.

So to see this, it's nice to see that we're moving ahead in trying to, in protecting vulnerable foreign workers. And that's who often gets hurt, is the people that are most vulnerable and people that don't understand our systems that we operate in, especially our archaic Eurocentric systems that we have people to, we expect them to fit into whatever our culture is here in Saskatchewan and yet we don't . . . We see a lot of foreign workers that come here and we take them to a hockey game and we say, hey, you're integrated. And yet we don't take that extra step to get to know more of who they are as a people and what they bring and what richness they have.

So it's good that we're looking at vulnerable workers and protecting them. However if this Sask Party government really did care about them, why did they slash the hard-to-fill skills immigration program with only 10 days' notice? You know, only 10 days' notice. That doesn't give people a whole lot of notice when they slash programs.

This will make it safer and fairer to bring foreign workers over but we still haven't seen . . . So this legislation here that we're looking at, immigration services Act, it's going to make it safer and fairer to bring foreign workers over, but we still haven't seen any decent retention initiatives from the government.

And when I worked in the health sector and I worked in health, recruiting family physicians in this province, I asked back then . . . And this was when the lean program was introduced, the failed lean program that this government invested \$40 million and it flopped. And at that time we were struggling with retaining family physicians in this province. That was just in 2014. We struggled with retaining internationally trained medical professionals here in this province.

[14:45]

That's in 2012, 2014 when lean was introduced, and we're still at it today. It's 2024, you know, and I think, how many people? Yes, it's great that we go and there's missions across other . . . going to other countries to attract workers. But what are we doing in our province to retain them, to keep them, to ensure that they want to stay in Saskatchewan?

What are we doing to ensure that they can connect with their people when they get here, that their cultures . . . Because when I worked in the health sector, I worked with doctors who had to travel to places, big centres like Calgary, to go and be with their communities, their cultural communities. And we lost those folks, those doctors that I worked with back then. We lost them because they didn't have that sense of community and we didn't retain them. We didn't do enough to retain them.

Sure, we did a wine and cheese and took them to a hockey party and said, there, you're integrated. I thought, what are we doing to create a space and a sense of community, not with just the workers themselves but their families? And that is what we're missing in this province. That is what we're missing.

So you know, I guess another question is, when this was created, like, who are the people that have been consulted in creating this? Because those people that are providing those front-line services are the ones that ought to be consulted and engaged in saying, look, this is what we're looking at. What do you think would be best? What would work? What would work?

I don't have much more to add to this. My colleagues have done a lot of entering their remarks in here. With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on Bill 160, *The Immigration Services Act*. Miigwech.

**The Speaker:** — The member has moved to adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

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

**The Speaker:** — Motion to adjourn the House. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. This House now stands adjourned till 1:30 tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 14:48.]

# GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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