

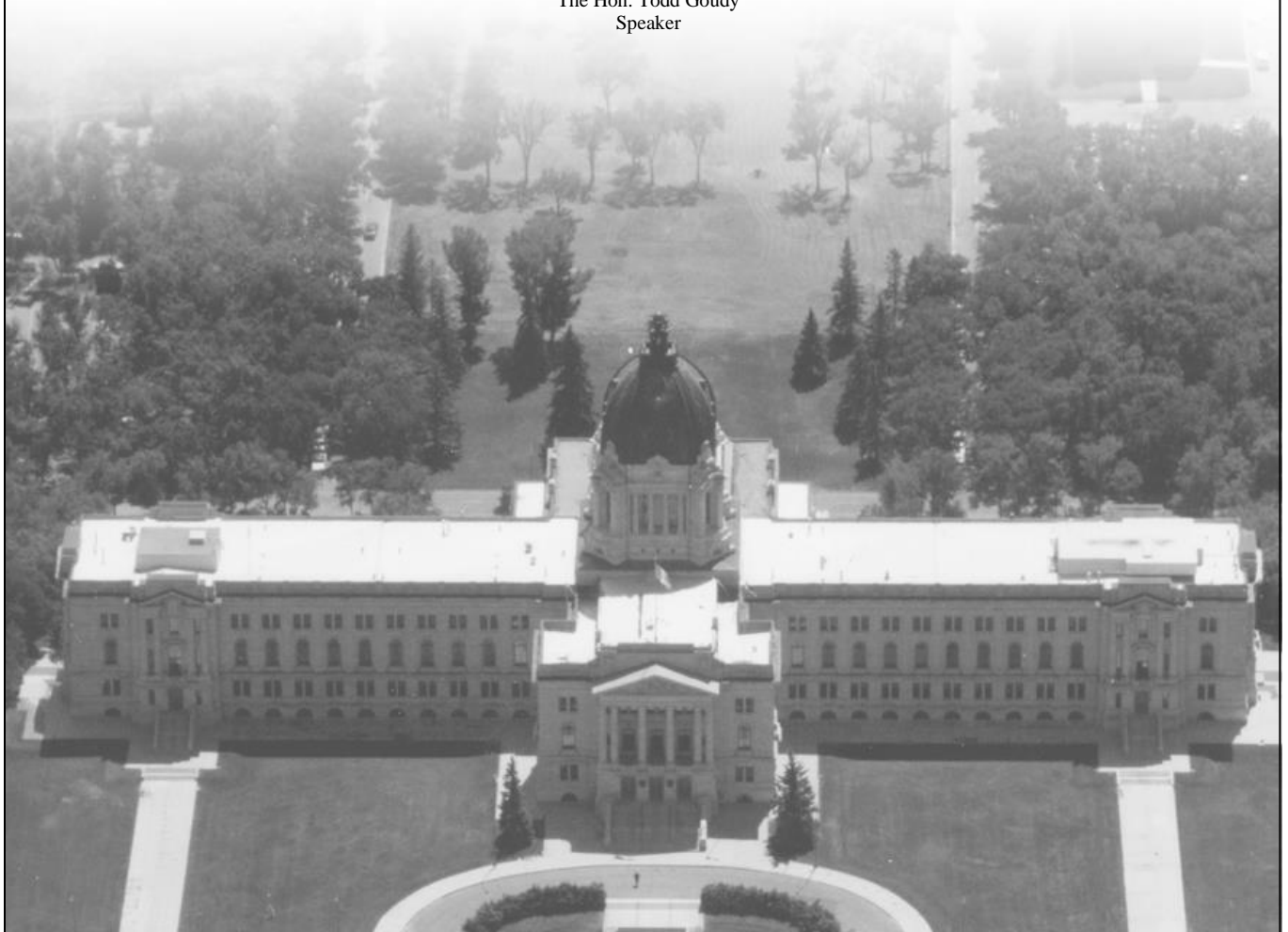
FIRST SESSION — THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)
Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Todd Goudy
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
1st Session — 30th Legislature

Lieutenant Governor — Her Honour the Honourable Bernadette McIntyre, S.O.M.

Speaker — Hon. Todd Goudy
Premier — Hon. Scott Moe
Leader of the Opposition — Carla Beck

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Laliberte , Leroy — Athabasca (NDP)	

Standings

Government Caucus: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 34; Opposition Caucus: New Democratic Party (NDP) — 27

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

Speaker Goudy: — Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, to all members of this Assembly, I would just love to take the opportunity to introduce everyone that has joined us here today on what is a very significant day in the province of Saskatchewan. It is budget day, the first day, the opening day of our Legislative Assembly, our provincial legislature, Mr. Speaker.

And I would also, in addition to welcoming everyone that is attending, thank them — thank them for what they do each and every day, whether it be in the industry that is creating wealth in this province, whether it be in their community contributing to the quality of life that we enjoy in communities from corner to corner in the great province of Saskatchewan.

And through you, through each of you, I ask you to thank those that you see each and every day in your personal life, thank those that you see in the industry that you work in or whoever you meet, Mr. Speaker.

Today as our province faces great uncertainty across this continent and around the world, Mr. Speaker, I think we are going to have the opportunity to see the very unique position of strength of which Saskatchewan is able to approach these challenges. And it's only due to the people that live in this great province.

And so through you and to you, to all members of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take the opportunity to welcome everyone here today and thank you for all you do in this great province.

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

Carla Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Premier in welcoming all of the guests who have joined us here today. As the Premier said, this is an important day — it's budget day, the first sitting of the spring session. This is also an important time for our province and for our country. This province and this country that we all love is under a threat that none of us have faced in our lifetimes.

Today in the galleries and on the floor of this Assembly I see leaders, at a time when this province and this country needs leaders, whether that be in agriculture, industry, and business; municipal leaders; former legislators; leaders in policing and corrections; First Nations leaders; leaders within their faith communities and cultural communities. I see parents and advocates and leaders of every description here with us today.

And I want to sincerely thank each and every one of you for your advocacy, for all that you do for your communities and the people of this province, for your willingness in the face of challenges to dig in and do what's needed. And that's always been our strength as a province, and it's more important now than it's ever been. It's truly an all-hands-on-deck moment, but I know that we can meet the challenges.

So again I join with the Premier in thanking all of those who have made the trip here today to join us on budget day, and for all you do to make Saskatchewan a better place. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — And I would like to take a moment to welcome you all as well, but I do want to make some comments about the members that serve you here in this Chamber. And I want to say that the hard work that they do each and every day is for you. And at the end of today, we'll have delivered the budget. And the hard work of these members that you sent to Regina, they represent you. And we hope that you all realize, that are sitting here today, that this is the servants of your great province. And you are welcome here any time in your Legislative Assembly.

And I just want to appreciate the hard work, and say to every one of the members in this Chamber that I appreciate you as friends, and any friends of your friends are my friends. And it's nice to be surrounded with all sorts of great Saskatchewan people here today.

So you're all welcome here. No pictures. Keep your phones in your pockets. And we're going to have a wonderful day. So thank you all for coming.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize . . . Who do I recognize? The member from Regina Walsh . . . Wascana Plains. I'm so very sorry. Had to start well.

Brent Blakley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly today to present a petition calling to address the affordability crisis in the province. These residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring attention to the following: that inflation is the highest it's been in more than three decades; that half of Saskatchewan residents were living paycheque to paycheque before transportation and food costs skyrocketed in 2022; that the Sask Party government's 32 new tax and fee hikes make life more expensive all while harming struggling industries like tourism, culture, and fitness. While other provinces acted, the Sask Party government ignored the opposition's calls for a gas price relief plan.

The prayer reads as follows:

We respectively request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to meaningfully address the affordability crisis in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories today reside in Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Bhajan Brar: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: that there were 951 health care closures across rural Saskatchewan between August 2019 and July '23; that 407 of those closures were to Saskatchewan emergency rooms; that for the first time, an emergency room in one of our major cities shut down due to staff shortages; that Saskatchewan had the longest wait time for knee- and hip-replacement surgeries; that it is unacceptable that women in the province are being forced to travel out of province for routine breast cancer diagnostic care; that Saskatchewan people deserve to have adequate and accessible health care where and when they need it.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately address the short-staffing crisis in health care and work with the health care workers on solutions to improve that.

The signatories of this petition reside in Saskatoon. I do so present. Thank you.

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

Kim Breckner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for the Government of Saskatchewan to improve conditions for Saskatchewan workers.

The undersigned residents would like to bring to our attention the following: that even after the October 1st, 2023 increase, Saskatchewan's minimum wages will remain the lowest in Canada; that paid sick leave has been proven to save employers money while making workplaces healthier and safer for all; that 71 per cent of workers in Canada have experienced workplace violence or harassment; and that the Canadian Bar Association has adopted a resolution discouraging the use of nondisclosure agreements to silence whistle-blowers and victims of abuse, discrimination, and harassment in the workplace.

With that, I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to improve conditions for Saskatchewan workers by passing legislation to increase the minimum wage; to create guaranteed paid sick leave; to limit nondisclosure agreements, which could silence survivors of workplace harassment and violence; and to require employers to track and report incidents of violence and harassment in the workplace.

The signatories of this petition reside in Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Sally Houser: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present this petition calling to address the housing crisis in Saskatchewan through affordable homes and tenant protections.

The undersigned residents wish to bring attention to the following. The cost of housing and rental housing in Saskatchewan has skyrocketed, making it increasingly difficult for many individuals and families to secure stable and affordable housing. Changes to SIS [Saskatchewan income support] and SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] have meant that over the past decade homelessness has surged, pushing people onto the streets.

Meanwhile the government has made drastic cuts to housing programs. Market vacancy rates are low in Saskatchewan's urban centres, and monthly rent costs have significantly increased while wages for Saskatchewan families have remained stagnant. And those on support have seen benefits cut, and more of their income assistance is going to rent than ever before.

The prayer reads as follows:

We, the undersigned, 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 would include restoration of the cuts made to the housing portfolio, investment in the development of affordable and low-income housing units, enforcement of rental protections for tenants, and allocation of resources towards development of second-stage housing and crisis shelters.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Silverspring.

Citizenship Ceremony Evokes Pride and Patriotism

Hugh Gordon: — Good day, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pride that I attended the Canadian citizenship ceremony in Saskatoon at TCU Place on March 11th. There I had the privilege of witnessing 83 newcomers swear their oath of citizenship and proudly become Canadians.

I'd never attended a citizenship ceremony before, and I must say it became a rather emotional moment for me. I realized during that ceremony its importance not just for those taking their oaths but for their families and for everyone else in attendance. I too felt the impact of welcoming these new Canadians at a time when we older Canadians are once again rediscovering our patriotism and the pride we all feel about being Canadian.

It reminded me, Mr. Speaker, that in this time — a time like no other — we Canadians and Saskatchewanians cannot ever take for granted the immense privilege of living here and the responsibility placed upon each and every one of us to defend this great land and the people living in it.

This ceremony is a reminder of the importance of the fact that Canada and Saskatchewan are made up of the people that work hard every day to make a difference for themselves, for their families, and their community, and that we as a nation will

persevere in this tumultuous time. Of that, no one in this Assembly should ever doubt.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

Increases to Municipal Revenue-Sharing Program

Doug Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 120th annual SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention was a success. We had some great conversations with our rural leaders, and we also had the opportunity to make some exciting announcements.

In 2025 the provincial budget will deliver a historic 361.8 million in municipal revenue sharing, making a significant increase of over 6 per cent from last year. This funding provides unwavering and unconditional support to our municipalities and ensures that every community can confidently plan their budgets and make a vital investment in driving growth of their prosperity.

Since the municipal revenue-sharing program was announced in 2007, we have delivered over 4.6 billion to municipalities, a testament of our robust and dynamic growth in Saskatchewan's economy. Our government is committed to affordability for all of our residents, agriculture landowners, businesses, and corporations.

[13:45]

The 2025-26 budget will also introduce a significant reduction in education property tax mill rates across the property classes, resulting in an annual property tax savings exceeding 100 million. This initiative will provide financial relief to property owners. This achievement is the direct result of strength and resilience of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we also want to thank the rural representatives for attending this year's SARM convention in Saskatoon. Thank you for another excellent convention, the questions and conversations, and your leadership. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood.

Support for Buy Local and Grow Local Campaigns

Keith Jorgenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about tariffs and the absolute amazing response that the people in Churchill-Wildwood have had to this threat to our economy and our sovereignty.

I've been a business owner for many years, and I've never in my life seen such patriotism, such desire to buy local. I'm seeing this not just at the retail level. Wholesalers too are Canadianizing their supply chains. My party and my office are attempting to do our part to encourage people to buy local. The NDP [New Democratic Party] caucus has created a great website, shopsk.ca, that highlights many great locally owned businesses.

My office is promoting a grow local campaign. In short, every tomato, every pepper that we grow is one less that we have to import from the United States. With the help of Churchill-Wildwood's amazing Pat Keyser, we'll be giving out several

hundred tomato plants to residents of Churchill-Wildwood.

As many of you know, Peavey Mart used to sponsor a biggest vegetable contest. My office has decided to take over this contest, and with the help of some of my colleagues, we'll be giving out prizes — not at taxpayers' expense — and I invite everyone to participate. So I ask the members on both sides of this legislature: do you have what it takes to grow the biggest tomato, the biggest potato?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Batoche.

Wakaw Student Attends Exclusive International Conference

Darlene Rowden: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a grade 12 student from Wakaw School. Kayla Peacock was 1 out of 10 Canadian students chosen to attend an exclusive event in Washington, DC [District of Columbia] after winning a \$10,000 Horatio Alger Association scholarship.

The scholarship is awarded to Canadian students who show perseverance and resilience through tough childhoods. Kayla's goal is to become a successful dentist and to then support her mom, who has supported her so much.

Kayla received notification last summer that she was selected for the University Success program, a course focused on communication and leadership skills. Kayla also attended a conference in Toronto last November where she learned valuable lessons on how to stand out as a leader, received first-hand advice on how to make meaningful connections and how to avoid burnout and how to network. After making an impact at the conference in Toronto, she was 1 in 10 students to be selected for an exclusive conference in Washington, DC.

Kayla feels that the Horatio Alger Association has done so much for her and provided an opportunity to make her mark on society. The scholarship will help fund her studies towards a biomedical undergraduate degree at St. Peter's College and the University of Saskatchewan.

I ask all members of this Assembly to recognize Kayla Peacock's hard work, dedication, and successes. Congratulations, Kayla.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Westview.

Saskatoon School Powwow Troupe Promotes Inclusivity and Pride

April ChiefCalf: — Mr. Speaker, on March 1st I had the opportunity to attend the opening of TeleMiracle 49 in Saskatoon. I was pleased to see that the first performers at the event were the Vincent Massey Powwow Troupe. Today I am honoured to rise in the legislature to recognize this amazing group of young people as well as the adults and sponsors who support the students in their cultural endeavours.

The students in the powwow troupe attend Vincent Massey School which is located in Massey Place, a neighbourhood in the constituency of Saskatoon Westview. The Vincent Massey Powwow Troupe originated six years ago. Shelley, Ambrose, and

Ryan act as mentors, and senior students also provide leadership. As well Western Business Machines provides crucial financial sponsorship for drums and travel. It is the only school powwow troupe in Saskatoon that includes drummers, singers, and dancers.

And I recently met with the students at the school and asked them about their experience participating in the troupe. The students told me they joined the troupe to learn about and preserve Indigenous culture and to promote inclusivity and pride.

Mr. Speaker, I am so proud of these students. Please join me in acknowledging the Vincent Massey Powwow Troupe and congratulating them and all performers of TeleMiracle 49. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Dakota-Arm River.

Saskatchewan Curling Teams Excel Nationally and Internationally

Barret Kropf: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to offer my sincere congratulations to Team Randy Bryden on winning the 2024 Canadian Senior Curling Championships. The team of Randy Bryden, Troy Robinson, Russ Bryden, Chris Semenchuck won the Saskatchewan championship and represented our province at the nationals where they took home gold in Moncton. By winning that national championship, they will now represent Canada at the World Senior Men's Curling Championship in April in Fredericton.

Randy won't be the only Bryden team to have represented Canada this year on that world stage. His son Josh won the U Sports national championship representing the University of Regina and qualified for the winter World University Games in Italy. They locked down a fourth-place finish at those world championships. And six days later from their return from Italy, they won again on home soil, locking down another championship for the U of R [University of Regina] at the Canada West Championships. A huge congratulations to Josh Bryden, Adam Bukurak, Carter Williamson, Ryan Grabarczyk — what a fantastic season of curling you've had.

To Randy and your team, you have some big shoes to fill in keeping up with the younger squad that bears your family name. We wish you all the best as you pursue that senior world championship.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, it's clear that curling is Saskatchewan's official sport, and we continue to have excellent representation on that world stage. I'd like all members to join me in congratulating these two teams and encourage all of us to take in the upcoming men's world championships in Moose Jaw starting on March 29th. Thank you.

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

Crown Corporations Prioritize Local Steel

Blaine McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. US [United States] tariffs have hit our steel, so we're hitting back with a

10 000-tonne accelerated order from Evraz. Our government is standing up for our province's interests with sensible solutions that protect jobs, the economy, and our residents.

SaskPower and SaskEnergy will continue to prioritize the purchase of local steel for our infrastructure projects. This 10 000-tonne order is the equivalent of three years' worth of steel for the Crown and this directive will keep over 400 hard-working residents on the job right here in Regina. Mr. Speaker, USW [United Steelworkers] Local 5890 union president Mike Day said, and I quote, "When hearing of commitments like this from the Saskatchewan government, it eases some of the uncertainty our members have been facing."

This is just another reason why our government will never take economic lessons from the members opposite. In the first three quarters of '24-25, the Crown sector awarded 1.2 billion to Saskatchewan suppliers, including nearly 100 million to Indigenous companies.

In a time of economic and international uncertainty, we are working to provide a stable path forward, and our Finance minister will be delivering a budget that supports this stable path forward. This government is committed to continuing to deliver for you, the hard-working people of this province. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Canadian Sovereignty and International Trade

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, the president of the United States has repeatedly said that he thinks that Canada should become the 51st state. He's mused openly about using economic force to take over Canada. Will the Premier condemn these comments here on the floor of this legislature today?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And we are very certain, very much facing unprecedented times, not only in North America but I think with our Canadian relationship globally. Our export-based trading relationship with partners not only, as I say, with the United States of America, but now we see tariffs coming from the country of China on canola, which is very much a concern to the people in this province, Mr. Speaker.

In those uncertain times Canadians and Saskatchewan families are not looking for words of rhetoric from any political party. What they're looking for is a plan forward, Mr. Speaker, a plan forward on how their government is going to lead through these times of uncertainty.

And I would say in the case of the province of Saskatchewan, it's a plan that has been in place in this province since 2007, a plan that is focused on engaging with our global markets. A plan that is focused on, Mr. Speaker, ensuring that we are supportive of significant infrastructure projects and the operation of those projects — pipes, ports, and rail — across this province, Mr. Speaker.

It's a plan that is enacting policies that make investments in the

mining sector, the oil sector, the ag sector very, very possible in the province of Saskatchewan. And that isn't that way across North America. It's a plan that has been in place for 18 years and supported by policy by the Government of Saskatchewan, not 18 days like the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

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

Carla Beck: — So, Mr. Speaker, let's review: no words of condemnation from that Premier. It's another meek and weak response from that Premier, and this is what is making people in this province so angry. This should not be hard to do. Simply say, "I condemn these threats by Donald Trump." Now just days ago we saw Marco Rubio come onto Canadian soil and repeat these threats of the 51st state.

Mr. Speaker, again, will the Premier condemn these comments?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, never will Canada become the 51st state. And we should ensure that we are making policy decisions that never put us in a vulnerable position to even be entertaining that, Mr. Speaker, across this nation.

Mr. Speaker, policy decisions like the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, when they didn't support the Northern Gateway or the Energy East pipeline, Mr. Speaker. Policy decisions, Mr. Speaker, where in their last election platform didn't even cost out — and which means they would cut — the trade offices in nine of our major markets around the world, Mr. Speaker, trade offices in countries where we are exporting now in excess of a billion dollars in nine of those countries around the world, Mr. Speaker.

We have expanded our export opportunity, expanded our export wealth in the province from \$17 billion in 2007 when we had the honour to form government; today to the last three years running, just under \$50 billion, Mr. Speaker. The environment has been put in place by policy decisions of this government, opposed by the members opposite, often opposed by our federal government, Mr. Speaker, but acted on by all of the people in this Assembly and across the province in the communities and industries where they live and work, Mr. Speaker.

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

Carla Beck: — I'll note again, Mr. Speaker, a lot of words and bluster from that Premier but no condemnation.

Now Donald Trump has not only insulted our sovereignty, he's also insulted Saskatchewan's world-class producers. Here's what he said to a joint session of Congress, and I quote, Mr. Speaker: "These goods come in from other countries and companies. They're really, really in a bad position in so many different ways. They're uninspected. They may be very dirty and disgusting." I end the quote, Mr. Speaker.

Today we're joined by many of this province's world-class producers. We grow the best crops. We raise the best cattle in the world.

Does the Premier condemn these comments by Donald Trump,

and is he okay with the US president calling ag products disgusting and uninspected?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, whether it be the oil and gas products that come from Saskatchewan; whether it be the potash, uranium, the mining products that come from Saskatchewan; whether it be the agricultural products that are produced in Saskatchewan, now we see, through investments being made, we are now selling ingredients not only to the United States of America but to over 160 countries around the world.

All of those products, Mr. Speaker, at a value of \$17 billion 18 years ago, and through policy decisions have had the opportunity to attract investment, today and the last three years running, are close to \$50 billion in export wealth, providing wealth to our families, to our industries, and to our communities across this province, Mr. Speaker. And it's some of the most sustainable, some of the most sustainable products that you can find on earth.

[14:00]

That's why we have trade offices abroad is to tell Saskatchewan's story. That's why we were at COP28 [Conference of the Parties 28] in Dubai, Mr. Speaker — criticized by the members opposite for attending, Mr. Speaker — to tell Saskatchewan's story of not only what we produce, the high-quality products that we produce, Mr. Speaker, but how they are produced, and why the world, as we look to the future, should buy more products from Saskatchewan, not less, Mr. Speaker.

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

Carla Beck: — I'm going to admit, Mr. Speaker, that I am surprised again by that Premier's weak response in the face of what we are facing in this province today.

Now this maybe shouldn't surprise me because this is a Premier who was last out of the gate with his response to the US tariffs. And from the very start this Sask Party government's response to Donald Trump has been weak, and it's been meek.

Why is this so hard for our Premier? This is what Saskatchewan people want to hear from their government. Why won't he condemn Donald Trump's attacks on our sovereignty and on our producers?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I was equally surprised and shocked when I saw the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, vote against the Keystone XL and the Northern Gateway pipelines on the very floor of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. I was equally surprised and shocked at their lack of support for the energy workers in this province, Mr. Speaker, and across the nation.

I was equally surprised and shocked when the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, ran on a platform of cutting our trade offices and our engagement with the world. Mr. Speaker, a province, the highest exporting per capita region of Canada, Mr. Speaker, exporting to over 160 countries around the world. As of this morning, 1.25 million people live here, Mr. Speaker, exporting

to over 160 countries around the world.

I was shocked to understand in the latest provincial election, the last provincial election, the members opposite were going to cut those engagement efforts and cut the funding to those offices, Mr. Speaker.

And I was most surprised and shocked when the NDP called our efforts to get rid of the carbon tax on everything for everyone in this province, taking that case to the Supreme Court of Canada, what did the members opposite say? It's nothing but a pointless crusade, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I'm just going to remind us when we're referring to the other side, it's either the opposition or the government. But I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Provision of Women's Health Care

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, this is a Premier who is weak when he needs to be strong. This is a Premier who deflects when he needs to be making a plan for the challenges that we are facing today in this province.

Mr. Speaker, he's also been missing in action when it comes to women's health care. Women in this province are still flying to Calgary to get the urgent mammograms that they need.

This is a government, Mr. Speaker, who is not focused on the future. They're more focused on helping their friends and their donors. When will we see a real plan from this government to deliver the essential health care that women in this province need?

Speaker Goudy: — Sorry, again. Yeah, we have to be careful when we're saying what their intentions were about giving their friends and their donors. I think we have to . . . Let's not tread there.

I recognize the Premier. Please answer the question that I . . .

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite said, we are funding and have purchased a number of diagnostics in Calgary, Mr. Speaker, as we have committed to using all of the tools that we have to lower the wait times and create access not only to diagnostics but to surgeries here in the province, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to a plan, this spring you're going to see right here in Regina the breast health centre of excellence will be opening, Mr. Speaker. As that opens, increased capacity in the province, Mr. Speaker, which will enable us then to start moving down the access age from 50 years down to 40. Most certainly a government that is investing more broadly in health care, investing very specifically in women's health, Mr. Speaker, and using the power of a growing, strong, and vibrant economy to do so.

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

Vicki Mowat: — We also need a plan to staff that breast health centre, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan women shouldn't have to fly to Calgary for health care they should be able to get here at home. For many women, they just can't afford to go. And the Sask Party government knows this.

We obtained emails sent to a Saskatchewan patient where the government admits, "There have been patients that have chosen not to go to Calgary due to costs." Another email: "Some people can't afford to participate in this initiative because they don't have the funds."

Does the Minister of Health think it's okay for Saskatchewan women to go without basic health care because they don't have the funds?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to echo what the Premier said in the previous answer, we are working right now, under construction, the breast health centre here in Regina. Opening this spring, Mr. Speaker, to improve diagnostic options for women in this province, to make the pathway for women who may have breast cancer easier in the southern half of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite talks about the option that we have for women to go to Calgary to advance in their breast cancer journey and to understand if there may be something that they need to deal with, Mr. Speaker, this is an option that this government has made available to Saskatchewan women. We've added an incentive, Mr. Speaker, to help people pay for some travel expenses as they go to Calgary, Mr. Speaker.

Thank goodness that we have that option available as we stabilize services in Regina and the southern half of the province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Health Care Staffing

Vicki Mowat: — An option for women who can afford it, Mr. Speaker.

We used to lead the nation in health care, but after 17 years of this Sask Party government, we're at the back of the pack. Almost every other province has better access to emergency room care than Saskatchewan. Retention is a massive problem, and instead of listening to health care workers to keep the ones that we still have left, this Sask Party government still hasn't even created a nursing task force.

When will the minister get the message and come forward with a real plan to get our emergency rooms out of last place?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the last few months I've had the opportunity to meet with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses as well as our three provider unions in this province, Mr. Speaker. An invitation will be going out to those four groups this week, Mr. Speaker, to

advance the patient-focused nursing team task force. I look forward to continue engagement with those four public sector unions, who represent many workers in our province, to understand what are the challenges that we're seeing and how we can find solutions to fix them.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just say, you know, over the last 12 months we've actually been able to reduce our reliance on contract nursing staff by 30 per cent, Mr. Speaker. How are we doing this, Mr. Speaker? We added 960 nurses, hired 960 nurses in the last 12 months. We're doing that through additional incentives, Mr. Speaker, many of which are in our rural communities. We're doing that through more nursing training seats around the province, including in my own community, North Battleford, where a student can now do all four years of their bachelor of nursing program right at home in The Battlefords. Mr. Speaker, this is how we are focused on making patient care accessible to all.

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

Vicki Mowat: — Nothing about our emergency rooms in crisis, Mr. Speaker, and it took them five months to send out an invitation for this task force. Shameful.

Mr. Speaker, after 17 years of this same old Sask Party government, our health care system is in last place. We have the longest surgical wait times in Canada for knee and hip surgeries, and we've been in last place for years. Years of being in last place and years of waiting in pain for patients awaiting surgery.

When will we see a real plan to bring Saskatchewan surgical wait times out of last place?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in this year we're going to do close to 95,000 surgeries in this province. That's the most surgeries that we've ever done in Saskatchewan in provincial history, Mr. Speaker. However this government knows that more surgeries are going to need to be done in this province to meet our four-year target of 450,000 surgeries, which will bring those wait times down, Mr. Speaker, and make sure that you and your family and myself and my family and everyone else in this room, that their loved ones have easier access and quicker access to the surgeries that they need, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite wants to know what the plan is going forward. Mr. Speaker, she'll just need to wait 15 or 20 minutes, and she'll hear about it in the budget speech.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Rochdale.

Child Care Agreement with the Federal Government

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government is failing in health care, and they are also failing with families that rely on affordable child care in this province. I have received hundreds of phone calls, letters, emails from parents — rural, urban — and child care operators concerned about the

future of affordable child care in this province. People are in utter dismay that this province is one of only two that have not renewed that child care agreement.

So tell me, why is it that renewing this agreement is good for families in 11 other provinces and not good enough for the families of Saskatchewan?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier has previously indicated, the province of Saskatchewan is prepared to negotiate and sign this agreement. That's why we're open to negotiating on an extension for this agreement. Keeping in mind that there is still a year left in this particular agreement, we look forward to continuing the conversations with our federal counterparts.

We want to make sure that this is a program and an extension that works for Saskatchewan families, that works for child care operators, that works for everyone in this province to make sure that we have a long-term, sustainable, affordable child care system for everyone across Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Rochdale.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, having access to affordable child care means that parents can join and, in some cases, rejoin our workforce. It means that they can contribute and power our economy. This is a good thing, Mr. Speaker, as there are countless jobs that are at risk if this deal isn't signed for rural, for northern and urban communities.

Child care centres have brought so much to our local economy, particularly in the rural areas — a beacon of hope in many communities. So what will it mean for families and for communities if we lose out on this deal?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've also been hearing from child care operators and families across this province, and I'm meeting with organizations such as the Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association. A couple of times I've talked to those individuals about the concerns they're bringing forward on behalf of child care operators in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we have made some significant strides here in Saskatchewan in this particular area since signing the initial agreement. We were the third province to reduce fees to parents to \$10 a day. The province has achieved 75 per cent of the goal to create 28,000 more child care spaces by 2026.

We are very grateful for everyone in this province that is working in this area — child care operators, early childhood educators, those that are doing this very important work for families right across this province in our major urban centres, in rural communities, the far North, right across this province, Mr. Speaker. It's something this government is committed to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Southeast.

Brittney Senger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, child care is an essential service that families, regardless of their income or where they live, deserve access to. Families like those of Ali Burgess or Kayla Madder depend on affordable child care so that they can pursue further education or provide for their families. I met with these women last week, and they are furious that this government is willing to risk thousands of jobs by not signing on to this deal. To quote Ali Burgess: “Child care creates jobs and daycare enables us to do our jobs.”

What does the minister say to the parents that rely on affordable child care to provide for their families and contribute to the economy?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said previously, the government remains in a position to continue to negotiate with our federal counterparts about the extension of the national child care agreement before it expires March 31st. Not of this year, Mr. Speaker, March 31st of 2026. There is a year to go in this particular agreement, Mr. Speaker.

There was a meeting of federal and provincial and territorial ministers back in the fall where this was not on the agenda, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't until there was a letter sent by the federal minister on February 6th indicating that Saskatchewan had but two weeks to sign an extension.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before publicly, I think it's important for us as a government, it would be responsible for us as a government to make sure that we're taking into consideration some of those concerns that are being raised by parents, by child care operators, you name it, across the province who agree that this is a good program.

But also I would say, Mr. Speaker, I would agree that there is room for improvement. That is what Saskatchewan wants to do. We want to be in a position to be able to negotiate an agreement that is better for everyone in Saskatchewan going forward when it comes to child care, Mr. Speaker.

[14:15]

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Southeast.

Brittney Senger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, why is it that this deal is good for families in 11 other provinces but not for women and families in Saskatchewan?

Our offices continue to receive hundreds of calls, emails, and letters from families that deserve to know the future of child care in this province. To quote Ali Burgess again: “I remember it wasn't long ago that the government received 17 emails on one particular issue, and they recalled the House for an emergency session.”

How many calls, emails, and letters has the minister received urging him to renew the child care deal?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will reiterate that the agreement still has a year to go, this five-year agreement, Mr. Speaker, that expires March 31st of 2026. Again, I do not think it would be responsible for us as a government to not be negotiating with the federal government to try to make improvements to this particular agreement to make sure that we can continue to offer affordable child care to families right across Saskatchewan, a sustainable, long-term program that will support those families in communities, Mr. Speaker, right across this province.

As I've said earlier, I've had the opportunity to meet and hear from parents across this province, to talk to child care operators, to meet with SECA [Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association], the association responsible for advocating on this particular issue, Mr. Speaker. And again, our officials at the provincial level will continue to work with our federal counterparts to make sure that we can try to make some improvements to this program to make sure that it is better for people right across this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for Agricultural Exports

Kim Breckner: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people are worried about the impacts tariffs will have on our economy, and they're downright angry about the comments Donald Trump has made about our exports. He told the joint session of Congress that our ag products are uninspected, dirty, and disgusting. Nothing could be further from the truth. My family member runs a grain elevator, and we have some of the cleanest, most inspected ag products in the world.

But we haven't heard one word from the Trade and Export minister about these offensive comments from Donald Trump. Will he stand up for our ag producers today?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export.

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I will stand up, and we will stand up, this government will stand up every day for our ag producers in this province. We have had countless ministers, various members of this caucus have had various engagements with US officials elected, with grower groups, with associations, with consumers — anyone who will advocate on our behalf in the country of the United States, Mr. Speaker. And this is the engagement that you will continue to see from this government, from this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to US tariffs that ultimately may risk our agriculture industry here.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Wascana Plains.

Addressing Homelessness

Brent Blakley: — Mr. Speaker, year after year this government has chosen to ignore the homelessness crisis in the province. The

result, Mr. Speaker, the homelessness crisis is impacting every city, big or small, in this province. The number of homeless in Saskatoon has tripled. It has doubled in Regina and Prince Albert, and more visible than ever in communities like Moose Jaw and Yorkton.

Will this government finally admit that they have it wrong and work with those on the front lines — many of whom are here today — to end the homelessness crisis we see in every Saskatchewan community?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Terry Jenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government has a plan for homelessness. It's called the provincial approach to homelessness. It's a \$40.2 million two-year plan, and we're in the midst of that right now.

As minister I've spent many weeks, many months now since becoming minister, meeting with different cities, different municipal leaders in Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Lloydminster. I've been working with those cities, collaborating with them to ensure that we are looking after the issue of homelessness.

We are providing shelter where it's needed, and to that end that work will continue through the year as we keep going with our provincial approach to homelessness. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

TABLING OF ESTIMATES AND SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to submit the estimates and supplementary estimates accompanied by a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

Speaker Goudy: — Those who are able to stand, please rise for a message from the Lieutenant Governor. The message is as follows:

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026, and supplementary estimates no. 2 of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2025, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Her Honour the Honourable Bernadette McIntyre,
Lieutenant Governor, province of Saskatchewan.

Please be seated. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

MOTIONS

Approval of Budgetary Policy (Budget Debate)

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and responsibility today to present the '25-26 Saskatchewan

budget. It's our government's 18th budget. But before I get into the text of the speech today, Mr. Speaker, there's some people I wish to introduce.

Now everyone witnessed just a few minutes ago a tradition of this Assembly when the Premier rose on his feet and introduced and welcomed everybody to their Legislative Assembly. There's too many people to introduce individually, obviously, Mr. Speaker. But tradition also gives the Finance minister some leeway when it comes to introducing family, so I'm going to take advantage of that today.

Mr. Speaker, my wife, Bonnie, has been so supportive of my political career. She's been in this Assembly many times for different events. She's been at Government House many times for different events. But because of her career, she has never had the opportunity to be here for a regular sitting day, so I've never had the opportunity to introduce her to this House. So that changes today. Colleagues, Members of the Legislative Assembly, please give Bonnie a warm welcome to her Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, my mother, Elizabeth Reiter of Wilkie, had planned on being here today, but she fell ill yesterday. I texted with her this morning. She assured me she's watching on TV so I wanted to say, I wish you were here, Mom. Get well soon.

And I also have here today as well my sister Laura Schwab from Wilkie. My brother Ken Reiter from Lloydminster — Lloydminster is, I think, a little over a five-hour drive here — drove down this morning and they're driving back later today. That's a 10-hour round trip today. I'm their brother. They've heard me speak before. They know what they're going to get, and they made that long drive anyway, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. It means the world to me.

Mr. Speaker, today we find ourselves in a challenging time and place in national and international politics. It's a time of uncertainty and upheaval caused by the words and actions of the president of the United States on tariffs. To say the president has been erratic and unpredictable is an understatement. We simply don't know what tariffs the US will impose, nor how long they will remain in effect. These two unknowns made it extremely challenging to develop this year's budget as it was not possible to build in the exact impact of the tariffs.

You've seen some other provinces include contingencies in their budgets. However these contingencies are not surpluses that are set aside; they simply increase deficits that will already be funded by borrowing.

The budget includes an analysis from the Ministry of Finance on the potential impacts of the tariffs on Saskatchewan. These uncertainties will show why including any amount of a contingency at this time would not be realistic. However we've been cautious on expenditures in today's budget and prudent on revenues to put us in the best possible financial position to weather the impact of these tariffs.

In developing this budget, we did not allow the threat of tariffs to back us away from any of our election commitments on affordability and safer communities, or our commitment to deliver change by addressing the challenges of growth, like

crowded classrooms and access to health care. Mr. Speaker, this budget delivers on those commitments.

The theme of this year's budget is *Delivering for You* and that's what this budget does. It's about strengthening our economy, growing our province, and promoting Saskatchewan's economic interests here at home, across Canada, and around the world. Whether you live in a city, town, or village, or live in rural Saskatchewan or northern areas of our province, this budget delivers for you.

The priority in this year's budget reflects the priorities Saskatchewan residents told us were most important to them. This budget delivers relief from cost-of-living pressures for everyone in Saskatchewan; improved access to care for patients and health care professionals; additional supports in the classroom for students, parents, and teachers; safer communities for residents in every part of Saskatchewan; and strong financial management.

Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget our government is following through on our promise to ensure the province remains the most affordable place to live, work, raise a family, and start a business. In December we introduced *The Saskatchewan Affordability Act*. Thirteen commitments from that legislation are being funded through this year's budget, including reducing income taxes for every resident, family, and small business in our great province. It will also provide targeted reforms that support seniors, families with children, new post-secondary graduates, persons with disabilities, caregivers, first-time homebuyers, and people undertaking home renovations.

We will deliver the largest personal income tax reduction in the province since 2008 by raising the basic personal exemption, spousal and equivalent-to-spouse exemption, dependent child exemption, and the senior's supplement by \$500 a year for the next four years. These changes will allow a family of four earning a combined \$100,000 to save more than \$3,400 over the next four years, while two seniors with a combined income of 75,000 will save more than \$3,100. Once fully implemented, these changes will mean an additional 54,000 residents of our province will no longer be paying provincial income tax.

We are also increasing monthly income assistance benefits by 2 per cent for Saskatchewan income support and Saskatchewan assured income for disability clients. Combined, more than 38,000 people are expected to receive these increased benefits.

This year's budget also delivers on our commitments to support access to fertility treatment by offering a refundable tax credit of 50 per cent towards the cost of an eligible fertility treatment in Saskatchewan, for up to \$20,000.

It also delivers on our commitment to permanently maintain the small-business tax rate at 1 per cent. This change will benefit more than 35,000 small businesses in Saskatchewan, saving them more than \$50 million in corporate income taxes annually.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to affordability measures, the '25-26 budget benefits everyone in our province. This includes property owners who will see reductions in education property tax mill rates to absorb the increase in assessment values, and keep education property taxes collected in the province revenue

neutral. This will save property owners more than \$100 million annually compared to leaving the mill rates unchanged. That means the increases in education funding that you will hear about today in just a few minutes will not come at the expense of homeowners and property owners.

This budget also delivers for students a 20 per cent increase to the graduate retention program, the benefit for a maximum tax credit of \$24,000 per post-secondary graduate who stays in Saskatchewan.

[14:30]

For homeowners, a 50 per cent increase to the first-time homebuyers tax credit and reinstating the home renovation tax credit. For families with young children, this budget doubles the active families benefit and also doubles the income threshold so that more families qualify for that benefit. For seniors who live in a personal care home, this budget delivers a thousand-dollar-a-month increase to the personal care home benefit. And for persons living with a disability, this budget delivers a 25 per cent increase to the disability tax credit.

In total the taxation changes introduced in this budget will provide more than 250 million in tax savings this year.

In addition to the new and enhanced programs, our government continues to invest in ongoing affordability initiatives that assist with cost-of-living pressures. This includes such things as the seniors' and children's drug plans, ambulance coverage for seniors, the Saskatchewan housing benefit, and the secondary suite incentive.

Every year we also adjust the provincial income tax brackets and basic tax credits to protect people from the rising costs of inflation. This measure tends to fly under the radar, but its impacts are large, providing Saskatchewan residents with more than \$40 million in tax savings this year. These are part of the \$2 billion in affordability measures that are built into each and every budget. They're another example of how the '25-26 budget is delivering affordability for the people of Saskatchewan.

In health care, this year's budget will deliver better patient access and more responsive care for Saskatchewan residents. This year the Ministry of Health will receive a record \$8.1 billion, which is an increase of 485 million or 6.4 per cent. The Saskatchewan Health Authority will receive an increase of 261 million, or 5.6 per cent, for a record \$4.9 billion budget.

This funding delivers better access to acute care programs and services, including reducing surgical wait times through an ambitious plan to perform 450,000 procedures over four years, which includes an innovative robot-assisted surgery program at Regina's Pasqua Hospital. Optimizing and realigning services at Saskatoon's City Hospital to address in-patient capacity pressures by opening more than 100 acute medicine and specialized beds. Enhancing and expanding pediatric care and programs, including specialist recruitment in the areas of endocrinology, respirology, rheumatology, and palliative care. Reducing wait-lists by performing specialized medical imaging services, such as CT [computerized tomography] scans, PET [positron emission tomography] scans, and MRIs [magnetic resonance imaging]. Completing and staffing the new breast

health centre in Regina. Enhancing kidney health programs and dialysis services by adding 30 full-time positions to allow people to receive treatment closer to home in Meadow Lake, North Battleford, Fort Qu'Appelle, Tisdale, Moose Jaw, Regina, and Saskatoon. And supporting initiatives to fund approximately 170 paramedic positions created within 58 rural communities since '22-23.

Mr. Speaker, this year's budget will also deliver better and more timely access to primary care. This includes investments in programs that will work towards connecting all residents to a primary health care provider. Our government is proud to be enhancing access to primary care through additional patient medical home sites that were based on a successful pilot project in Swift Current. The program allows clinics to care for additional patients due to the extra capacity the team creates, with each provider working to their full scope.

This year's budget also delivers \$279 million to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, which is an increase of 30 million or 12.2 per cent. This funding will ensure Saskatchewan patients have access to the most current and effective oncology drugs, therapies, and treatment options, including continuing development of a provincial lung cancer screening program, lowering breast cancer screening eligibility to age 43, and adding a second mobile bus to increase mammogram capacity for women in rural and northern Saskatchewan.

Rural, regional, and remote communities will benefit from improved access to primary care services with the addition of 27 new nurse practitioners.

Throughout this year's budget our government will strengthen continuing care to help residents remain at home and within their own communities for as long as possible. This also continues support for alternate level-of-care service. Fifty long-term care beds and 65 convalescent beds in Saskatoon will help reduce pressures and assist with the flow of patients in the health care system.

As always, mental health and addictions remains a priority for our government. In this year's budget we are making a record investment of nearly 624 million in mental health and addictions programs and services. This is an increase of 53 million or 9.2 per cent. Overall, mental health and addictions is receiving 7.7 per cent of the overall health budget. This will allow for continued progress on the mental health and addictions action plan, which continues to make services more accessible, provides better coordination of care, and allows people to access the treatment they need in a more timely manner.

The '25-26 budget invests an additional 16 million in addiction spaces to build on our government's commitment to add 500 addictions treatment spaces across the province. Once completed, this will double the capacity of addiction spaces in the public health system.

This year's budget also increases access to addictions medicine across the province by implementing a new virtual access to addictions medicine program and adding supports for the existing opioid agonist therapy program. It supports the development of a central intake and navigation system that patients can contact directly for treatment and facilitates a

transition to a recovery-oriented system-of-care model.

Mr. Speaker, it's important for our government to provide these investments for our provincial health care system. However we also need to ensure we have the people in place to provide those services. The '25-26 budget delivers on our commitment to accelerate the hiring of health care professionals through the health human resources action plan. This includes adding 10 more physician training seats for family medicine, anesthesia, plastic surgery, and other specialties for a total of 150 seats in the province. Supports for 65 enhanced, permanent, full-time nursing positions in 30 rural and northern locations across the province to increase nurse stability and reduce the reliance on contract nurses. This builds on 250 positions that were approved over the past few years. Investments to support the province's efforts to recruit and retain doctors, including the funding for fee increases, increased utilization of services, and additional physicians. And supporting incentives for recruitment of specialist physicians in areas of high demand.

The '25-26 budget also invests in steady and significant progress on multiple infrastructure projects. Overall health capital funding will increase by 140 million to a total of 657 million. This is the highest-ever capital budget to deliver major health infrastructure projects.

Some of the projects include construction of the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital, construction of the Regina specialized long-term care facility, construction of the Saskatoon urgent care centre, construction of the La Ronge long-term care facility, construction of the Weyburn General Hospital, and construction of the Grenfell long-term care facility. Due to the positive response to the Regina Urgent Care Centre, planning is under way for additional urgent care centres in Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, and North Battleford, as well as second urgent care centres in Regina and Saskatoon.

The budget also provides new capital funding to plan for the expansion of complex-needs emergency shelters in new communities, building on the pilot projects in Regina and Saskatoon. These shelters provide individuals in crisis with a safe place to stabilize while being monitored for the negative effects of drugs or alcohol.

Mr. Speaker, the '25-26 budget also delivers increased opportunities and supports for kindergarten to grade 12 students, parents, and teachers across Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, over the last two years our government has invested more than \$5 billion in kindergarten to grade 12 education. This year the Ministry of Education will receive 3.5 billion, which is an increase of 184 million or 5.5 per cent. School operating funding will total 2.4 billion, which is an increase of 186 million, or 8.4 per cent.

We were pleased when the results of binding arbitration were recently announced so we can finalize an agreement with our province's teachers. This budget will fully fund that agreement. It includes an increase of 130 million to fund the new collective agreement and address growing student enrolment and the challenge facing today's classrooms.

Investments in specialized support classrooms will help address some of these challenges. Building on the success of a pilot project in eight Saskatchewan schools last year, this year's

budget provides funding for 50 additional specialized support classrooms throughout the province. These classrooms help reduce interruptions by providing additional supports to students who need them.

Student literacy is another area of emphasis in this year's budget. Learning to read at an early age is one of the most valuable skills developed during childhood and sets the foundation for lifelong academic success. Given its importance, our government is providing additional funding to build upon the work taking place in the Ministry of Education and school divisions to improve kindergarten to grade 3 reading levels in Saskatchewan.

We also want to ensure our students have properly maintained schools to attend. The budget provides increased preventative maintenance and renewal funding to allow school divisions to maintain existing facilities. It also delivers on the challenges of student enrolment growth by investing in new schools. This includes ongoing funding for 21 new or consolidated schools and three major renovations as well as funding to begin planning for one new replacement school and preplanning for four new schools. These include a replacement for South Corman Park School, preplanning for a new public school and a new Catholic school in Kensington in west Saskatoon, and preplanning for a new joint-use school in Aspen Ridge in northeast Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, our government's commitment to education does not end there. This budget also supports students as they advance into post-secondary education and start to determine their career paths. It provides opportunities that will allow students to pursue post-secondary education close to home while focusing on programs that meet the needs of Saskatchewan's labour force and provincial economy. The Ministry of Advanced Education will receive 788 million in this year's budget, with 1.6 billion invested in post-secondary education over the past two years.

Health care training is a key priority in that budget. New and expanded programs will help build a stronger health care workforce to meet the needs of Saskatchewan residents, including training seats in areas of critical need. Investments include 60 new training seats this year for nurse practitioners, registered psychiatric nurses, and medical radiologic technologists, and four new training programs that will soon be accepting students: physician assistants, speech language pathology, occupational therapy, and respiratory therapy.

The budget also focuses on another in-demand profession in Saskatchewan — veterinary services in rural and urban communities. Our government is investing in the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Saskatoon which is working towards an expansion that will allow for more students in the future.

This year's budget provides 41 million in capital investments to improve learning environments and align academic programs with labour market needs. Some of those major investments include adding seats in programs for medical laboratory technology, medical radiologic technology, and respiratory therapy programs at Saskatchewan Polytechnic's Regina campus; ongoing seat expansion of the medical radiologic technology program at Polytechnic's Saskatoon campus; and ongoing planning for the new Saskatchewan Polytechnic Joseph A. Remai Saskatoon Campus.

Mr. Speaker, to help ensure predictable and stable funding for our province's post-secondary institutions, this budget extends the current multi-year funding agreement for an additional year. This will allow our government and post-secondary institutions time to work through the potential impacts of the federal government's reduction of foreign student visas before engaging in another multi-year funding agreement.

Post-secondary funding in this year's budget also includes an increase of 12 million to base funding to reflect an increase provided in '24-25, and an increase of \$6 million in operating funding.

Mr. Speaker, everyone in Saskatchewan should feel safe in their community. The '25-26 budget delivers safer communities across the province by enhancing the presence of law enforcement in Saskatchewan. Over the last two years we have invested \$2 billion into community safety.

For the upcoming fiscal year the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety will receive 798 million, including 119 million for the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency. The Ministry of Justice and Attorney General will receive 271 million.

[14:45]

Increases to the municipal police grant program will help front-line officers respond to more calls for service, while increased funding for the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] will support operations in the province and the RCMP First Nations policing program.

This year's budget also includes funding to continue public safety commitments announced last fall. These include hiring approximately 100 new municipal police officers, hiring 14 new safer communities and neighbourhoods personnel to reduce crime by targeting nuisance properties, and funding for the Saskatchewan Police College to train more officers in the province.

In addition to these law enforcement resources, the budget is funding 50 new positions for the Saskatchewan marshals service, which is expected to become operational in the coming months, a full year ahead of schedule.

In January of this year, our government introduced the Saskatchewan border security plan to mobilize provincial protective services officers to work in partnership with provincial policing services and federal agencies to boost law enforcement's presence near the border. To complement the increased presence of law enforcement personnel, the budget includes funding to improve safety and address capacity concerns at correctional facilities. This includes support for the opening of the new expansion at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre and expanding capacity for women in the correctional system. Increased funding is also being provided to the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan to support its effort to successfully reintegrate female offenders back into their communities.

Saskatchewan communities will have greater access to justice services through the budget to enhance public safety. Additional investments will be made in interpersonal violence programs and

services, including second-stage housing. The budget also delivers funding to create a more accessible court system for municipal bylaw offences to ensure cases are ready to move to trial more quickly. This includes the development of municipal bylaw hubs in Fort Qu'Appelle and Rosthern which will streamline and improve municipal bylaw enforcement and reduce the strain on our provincial courts.

This budget also supports initiatives that reduce the amount of time police need to spend in court, giving them more time to focus on core policing duties that keep our community safe. The safety of our communities also extends to protection and support during emergencies such as wildfires and floods. Safety investments in this year's budget will allow the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency to continue its four-year plan to purchase four repurposed air tankers for use in fighting wildfires and other emergency services.

Mr. Speaker, the 2025-26 budget delivers on the priorities of affordability, health care, education, community safety, and strong financial management. However it delivers much more than that. Some of the other important investments in this year's budget include: the Ministry of Social Services will receive 1.6 billion in this year's budget, an increase of 70 million or four and a half per cent; 9 million in new funding to start multi-year repair and renovation projects for 285 Saskatchewan Housing Corporation-owned units in Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert; and 25 million for services developed through the provincial approach to homelessness.

Over the past two years, funding from the Ministry of Social Services has created 120 new emergency shelter spaces, 155 new supportive housing spaces, new street outreach services, and an expanded income assistance mobile workforce, serving clients on site at more than 30 community-based organization locations, and a \$20 million increase across government in funding for community-based organizations.

It also includes a record \$362 million in municipal revenue sharing, which is an increase of 22 million or 6.3 per cent; investment in capital projects that will improve our provincial transportation system, including passing lanes for Highway 10 between Fort Qu'Appelle and Melville and Highway 17 north of Lloydminster, Highway 39 twinning at Weyburn, ongoing corridor improvements on Highway 5 east of Saskatoon, and improvements on more than 1000 kilometres of provincial highways.

It also delivers the creation of a new Saskatchewan young entrepreneur bursary to support youth entrepreneurship in our province, the creation of a new small- and medium-enterprise investment tax credit, and introduction of the low productivity and reactivation oil well program to encourage new capital investments in low-producing and inactive horizontal oil wells.

Mr. Speaker, the '25-26 budget delivers for Saskatchewan people on all these priorities and more, while also delivering a balanced budget. The forecast surplus is \$12 million. This year's surplus is driven by forecast revenues of 21.1 billion, which is an increase of 1.2 billion or 6 per cent compared to last year. Revenues are forecast to increase due to a combination of increased corporate income tax, PST [provincial sales tax], and uranium resource royalties as construction activity and our

population continue to grow. Total expense is projected to be 21 billion, an increase of 909 million or four and a half per cent from last year's budget.

Besides the surplus, another sign of Saskatchewan's strong financial position is our net debt position. Currently it remains second-lowest net debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratio among Canadian provinces. Mr. Speaker, our government's strong financial management is also reflected in the province's credit ratings. Saskatchewan currently maintains the second-highest credit rating among the provinces when the ratings from the three major agencies are considered. These ratings influence the cost the government pays to borrow money, and are an important indication of a government's fiscal health.

Saskatchewan's strong financial position in this year's budget builds on the strong performance of our provincial economy in 2024. Last year Saskatchewan reached an all-time-high population, and I am very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to share that just today Statistics Canada announced that Saskatchewan's population has topped one and a quarter million people for the first time ever.

Saskatchewan also had record-high levels for labour force and employment, including full-time, female, and off-reserve Indigenous peoples, the third-highest value of goods exported in Saskatchewan history at more than \$45 billion, the second-lowest inflation rate, and the second-lowest unemployment rate in the country.

The Saskatchewan economy is expected to continue to grow in 2025. The province's real GDP is projected to grow by 1.8 per cent, the third-highest rate of growth in the country. Investment in business and residential construction is expected to increase along with continued strength in population and employment growth. All of these signs point to the continued strength of the Saskatchewan economy.

Mr. Speaker, since 2007 our government has been guided by growth, growing our population, growing our communities, growing our exports, growing our job opportunities, growing our industries, and growing our economy. We do not seek growth simply for the sake of growth, but for what it means to our province's people.

Growth drives increases in revenue, which pays for the things that matter — health care, education, community safety, and a lot more. A growing economy in a growing province means a better quality of life for the one and a quarter million people and counting who now call Saskatchewan home.

That's what this budget delivers. There will always be challenges to overcome, and there certainly are today, but the spirit and resilience of this great province will always overcome any challenges we face.

Saskatchewan is and will remain a strong province with a strong economy and within a strong and united Canada. Our future is bright, and our province has a history of delivering when it really counts. That's what this budget is doing — delivering for you.

Mr. Speaker, I now move, seconded by the member from White City-Qu'Appelle:

That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — It's been moved by the Minister of Finance and seconded by the member from White City-Qu'Appelle:

That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Mount Royal.

Trent Wotherspoon: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to rise today on the floor of the Saskatchewan legislature on Treaty 4 territory, the homeland of the Métis, to enter into debate of the budget that was just presented, on behalf of Saskatchewan's official opposition.

Saskatchewan is defined by its potential with its vast resources; the pride, the work ethic, compassion of its people; and the big ideas that drive our prosperity and innovation. You can clearly see this by the people that have joined us here today in the galleries all around us and on the floor of this Assembly. People that lead as entrepreneurs, as workers, as educators, and those that serve in health care; leaders in business and in labour; rural and urban municipal leaders; school board leaders; Indigenous leaders; leaders in arts and culture. And we're joined by some of the finest agricultural producers in the world, leaders of diverse faiths, and community builders who enrich our province.

I see people of varying political persuasions sharing this space because of our shared democratic values and our shared commitment to a brighter future for all the people of our province, from corner to corner to corner to corner in this province that we all love. Thank you to all of you for being here and all the ways you contribute to the province.

My son William isn't here with us here today. He had a soccer practice he didn't want to miss at lunch, and he's getting ready for a big hockey playoff game. And Steph said she was too busy in the classroom today and wasn't able to join us. But I see my mom and dad, and great to see them both here today. You know, mom texts me almost every day after question period, even if I miss the mark, "great job." She says, oh, and you looked so good. So that's when I know she's really kidding me.

Mr. Speaker, outside the doors of this legislature and down the sidewalks, just 200 metres from us, stands a monument that remembers the lives of those that lost their lives serving their country in pursuit of freedom. In those conflicts, our Canadian and Saskatchewan soldiers, sailors, and aviators risked it all. And they did so in almost all those conflicts, including both World Wars, alongside the United States as allies. Canadian and Saskatchewan soldiers, like my grandpa and thousands of others, landed and stormed those beaches on D-Day alongside Americans as allies, and they fought side by side to victory.

Today we're under economic attack by that ally. We're enduring threats to our sovereignty. And all from a long-time friend and ally, our neighbour, that at the same time is reaching out and working with Russia's dictator that's committing atrocities that

are beyond description. Mr. Speaker, our nation and our province faces an incredible challenge with unprecedented threats. This is far bigger than any of us, way bigger than any partisan political interest. In the words of my leader, Canada will always be number one. Never, never will we be the 51st.

[15:00]

From the moment these threats emerged, our leader and team have been making the standing offer and taken the approach as full-fledged members of Team Saskatchewan. We've offered up an all-hands-on-deck approach. And we've worked tirelessly, reaching out to work with and listen to industry and businesses, workers and producers, local leaders — so many in fact that are with us here today. This is about our province and our country, our livelihoods and our way of life, and about the future we're building for the next generation.

Unfortunately this current provincial government has failed to take us up on that offer to bring a united Team Saskatchewan to the battle, uniting in this legislature to win. And it's become clear that this Premier and government have been the slowest and brought the weakest provincial response in the country to protect our interests.

Inspired by no. 9 from Floral, Saskatchewan, it's time to get our elbows up. And just like hockey, we will win. And you know, Mr. Speaker, that when it's "go" time in the big game and the puck's dropped, it's not leadership to hide on the bench re-taping your stick. It's time to get over the boards and get after it.

Let me be clear: this is a time for leaders to stand up, not to suck up. We must live facing the reality that this province is up against, and control what we can control. And this budget fails on these counts.

This budget is not focused on the future of our province, and it denies the realities we face and ignores the times we're living in. It has no plan for our economy, no measures to plan and protect against the tariffs. Only offers up cuts for health and education.

Unfortunately with this government, budget has become a charade, an exercise in political spin and communications. It fails to provide the accountability or fiscal foundation that people in this province deserve.

Let's focus on the facts. The tariff and tariff threats we are facing are real. So are the consequences. Our government can't choose to just close their eyes, cross their fingers, hope it all goes away, as producers are already paying the price.

Just look at the collapsing price of canola as tariffs are threatened and imposed by the US and by China — more than \$2-a-bushel hit that canola producers have already taken — and incredible uncertainty as they prepare for another growing season; as livestock producers see the price of feeder cattle drop and are in an industry that's so deeply integrated with the US; as proud steelworkers at that mill just north of Regina and all the businesses and workers connected to the steel industry and agricultural manufacturing are either being hit with job loss or bracing for impact; as families and seniors face more hikes to their cost of living all while their hard-earned savings and pensions are taking a hit and in decline.

The Sask Party is asleep at the wheel. There are no plans for tariffs in this budget. No contingency in this budget. No impacts of the tariffs booked in this budget. No measures or actions to build, that are new to diversify trade. And critically nothing to act to build the trade-supporting infrastructure, the transportation infrastructure we need, such as acting to bolster rail and port capacity including short lines here in this province, secure a pipeline to the east, and more as we've called for. Presenting a budget in these times, in times such as these, that fails to incorporate the tariffs we face let alone rise to the challenge defies belief.

And when it comes to health care — it's clear as day on page 27 of this budget — this government is cutting health care funding. It's less than the actual of last year. The Premier and the ministers and that Health minister need to look the people of Saskatchewan in the eye and explain how they have found it within themselves to cut health care when we're facing overrun hospitals, emergency room closures and waits, the longest wait times for surgeries in Canada, and women being sent to Calgary on their own dime for mammograms and breast biopsies. You get what you pay for. Cuts equal closures and waiting longer — simple as that. Saskatchewan used to be a nation leader in health care. Now we're dead last and going backwards with cuts that will be forced once again in this budget.

We're in a mental health and addictions crisis in Saskatchewan. One person is dying every day from overdoses while this government wastes money on virtual treatment and treatment facilities that never properly opened, like the one in Lumsden. Millions have been wasted as lives continue to be lost. All too often those in the grips of addiction and reaching for help are denied that opportunity, all too often with the most tragic of consequences.

There's nothing in this budget either to deal with homelessness or to support the most vulnerable among us in a better way.

And when it comes to education, something that should be treated as the foundation of our province's future, instead this Sask Party government has driven per-student funding to last place in Canada, devastating classrooms and cutting the supports needed and deserved by students. Despite the empty rhetoric, the budget does nothing to step up.

Again on page 27 this government's budget, in the black and white, it shows a cut to education funding, if you can imagine investing less this year than the government did last year when so many classrooms across our province have been at a breaking point. Making cuts and shorting students of the education they need and deserve says it all. This is not a government focused on the future.

Saskatchewan people are working harder and harder and falling further behind. People have been facing a once-in-a-generation cost-of-living challenge made even steeper by a government that, well worse than doing nothing, has hiked costs and taxes on Saskatchewan people and businesses on front after front, including of course imposing the biggest tax hike in Saskatchewan's history with their massive tax hike and expansion to the PST.

People need relief now, but this government's promised

measures, their minor tax cuts, won't provide any savings until 2026. The people of our province deserve a budget that offers a solid fiscal foundation. People deserve the facts and a government that can manage a budget.

Mr. Speaker, the years of mismanagement, scandals, and waste and lack of accountability has caught up with this government. With this budget the Sask Party has officially quadrupled our province's debt to more than \$38 billion and counting. And it's Saskatchewan people of course that are now footing the bill to pay a staggering \$1 billion a year just to service that debt. The cost to service this ballooning debt itself grew by more than \$100 million this year alone. Now that's on top of it growing over \$100 million the year prior. And if you look in the out years, it's going to grow by that same amount — over \$100 million each and every one of those years.

Those are hundreds of millions of dollars that are being wasted on high interest to pay for mismanagement instead of going into the priorities of Saskatchewan people. The fact is, because of this government's mismanagement, their taxing and squandering, our public finances are in a much weaker position than they should be. As for their claims of balance in this budget, well their awful fiscal and budget track record speaks for itself. They couldn't balance a budget during the best years let alone in times of challenge.

They stuck Saskatchewan people . . . Heckling from the Finance minister here with his first budget. And I can understand he'd be worked up because it's an awful budget. He says he balanced it last year. He needs to look at the third quarter report. They thought they might. They ran almost a billion dollar deficit and missed their spending by a billion dollars. And that Finance minister should know better . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Let it all out. Let it all out.

They've stuck Saskatchewan people with the bill — higher costs and taxes and without the position of financial strength they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, in these unprecedented times and economic threats and tariffs we need to focus on the future of our province's economy and the realities and challenges we face today. By failing to do so this budget isn't worth the paper it's written on. It's like the current government is just mailing it in. You see it here today. They presented a budget that takes us backwards with cuts to health and education, fails to address the cost of living or the mental health and addictions crisis that is taking the lives of far too many, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan is a province of immense potential. Our greatest resource is our people. This budget fails the people of Saskatchewan in the most serious ways. We need a government that's focused on the future; a government that believes in that future and the potential of this province; a government that steps up, builds strength, and that extends hope and opportunity in this province that we all love and as leaders in the True North, strong and free.

Mr. Speaker, I'll have more to say on the budget tomorrow but at this time I'll move to adjourn debate.

Speaker Goudy: — The member from Regina Mount Royal has

moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Resumption of Budget Debate

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move:

That debate on the motion “That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government” be resumed on Thursday, March 20th, 2025.

Speaker Goudy: — It’s been moved by the Government House Leader:

That debate on the motion “That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government” be resumed on Thursday, March 20th, 2025.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this House do now adjourn.

Speaker Goudy: — Before I place the question on adjournment, I want to first say thank you to all of our guests who have joined us here today and for your co-operation in following the rules. We did well down here too.

And now I’d like to extend an invitation to our guests to join the members — who serve you well — and your friends for a tea in the Legislative Library, when you go out these doors to the right, or room 218 to the left.

At this time I will place the question. The Government 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.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried. This House is now adjourned until tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. Thank you all.

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:15.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

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

Hon. Lori Carr
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,
Seniors and Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Advanced Education

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill
Minister of Health

Hon. Daryl Harrison
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Water Security Agency

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
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
Lotteries and Gaming Saskatchewan Corporation

Hon. Everett Hindley
Minister of Education

Hon. Terry Jenson
Minister of Social Services

Hon. Warren Kaeding
Minister of Trade and Export Development
Minister Responsible for Innovation

Hon. Travis Keisig
Minister of Environment

Hon. David Marit
Minister of Highways
Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement
Minister Responsible for the
Global Transportation Hub Authority

Hon. Tim McLeod
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety
Minister Responsible for the Firearms Secretariat

Hon. Jim Reiter
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance
Minister of Immigration and Career Training
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the
Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board

Hon. Alana Ross
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan

Hon. Eric Schmalz
Minister of Government Relations
Minister Responsible for
First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for the
Provincial Capital Commission

Hon. Colleen Young
Minister of Energy and Resources