



FIRST SESSION — THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE

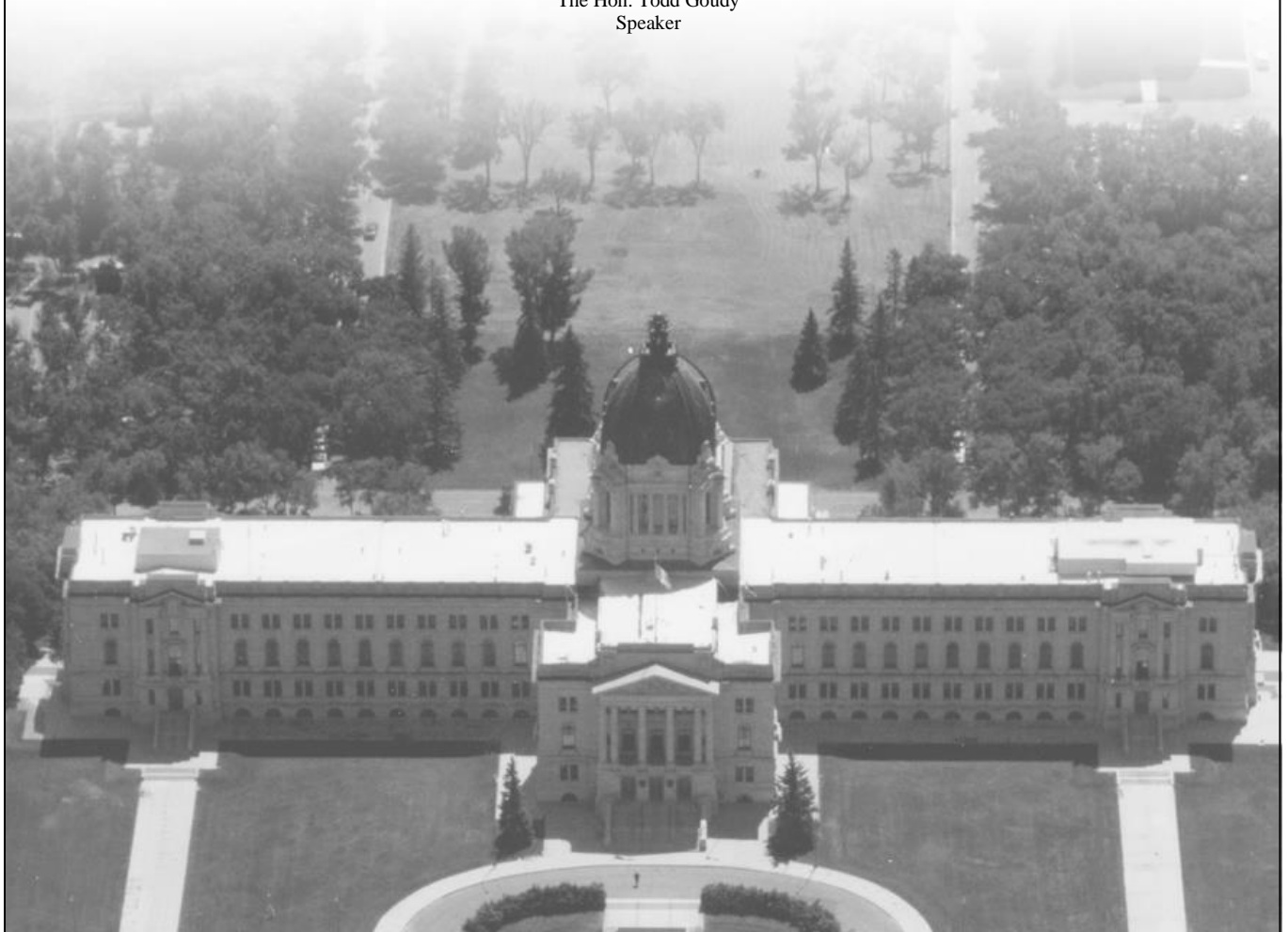
of the

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.

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

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Warrington, Darcy — Saskatoon Stonebridge (NDP)
Weedmark, Kevin — Moosomin-Montmartre (SP)
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Wilson, Sean — Canora-Pelly (SP)
Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Mount Royal (NDP)
Young, Aleana — Regina South Albert (NDP)
Young, Hon. Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

Standings

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

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Colleen Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask leave for an extended introduction.

Speaker Goudy: — Leave has been requested for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Hon. Colleen Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seated in your gallery this morning are some of our great energy industry associations and their members. So when I say your name just give me a little bit of a wave. So we have the Canadian Propane Association; Scott Morris with FCL [Federated Co-operatives Ltd.] and Jason White with CanGas; the Explorers and Producers Association of Canada, Mike Fulsom and Jen Paterson; the Canadian Association of Energy Contractors, Mark Scholz; and from Enserva we have Taylor Peck with Summit Earth Services.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all of them and their associations and their members for putting on an excellent MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] reception for all of us last night. I was honoured to bring greetings on behalf of the government.

Now more than ever, energy security is crucial for the betterment of our province and our country. These associations work every single day along with their members to ensure we are moving towards that goal. So for that we are so grateful and very thankful to them. So I ask all members to join me in thanking them for the work that they do every day in this province to ensure energy is there for everyone. So please join me in thanking and welcoming these folks to their legislature.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina South Albert.

Aleana Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join in with the minister opposite and welcome these fine folks to their gallery here today on behalf of the official opposition. Thank you for all that you do, not just for the energy sector as a whole, but also for the economy and for the homes and families whose houses you keep warm, whose kitchen tables you keep fed, and whose careers you keep moving here in Saskatchewan as well across the province.

As the minister said, we're certainly in a time that we celebrate of, I think, renewed support and excitement when it comes to the energy sector here in Saskatchewan as well as across the country as a whole. You've always just been such excellent proponents for your sector as well as the families that you support, the important contributions that you make to our provincial economy. So on behalf of the official opposition, I'm just proud

and privileged to add our welcome and our thanks for all that you do and welcome you here to this, your Legislative Assembly.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Colleen Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to take a moment to introduce and welcome someone to our Legislative Assembly today who just snuck in behind us. And that is to introduce Minister Rebecca Schulz, who is seated behind the bar with us here.

Rebecca is the Alberta Minister of Environment. And I understand she had a meeting this morning with our Minister of Environment, and I will be meeting with her after the House today. So Rebecca, as we all know, is no stranger to this building and to the legislature. So I ask all members to join me today in welcoming Rebecca Schulz to the legislature.

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

Jared Clarke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming Ms. Schulz to the Saskatchewan legislature. Here in Saskatchewan we have lots in common with Alberta, and it's always good to chat about common issues and values across the prairies and work together to find solutions that are pragmatic and make sense for Canadians. So thank you, and I ask all members to welcome Ms. Schulz to our Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Daryl Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Request a leave for an extended introduction.

Speaker Goudy: — Leave has been requested for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Hon. Daryl Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce Cody Straza and Allison Squires in the west gallery, the owners and operators of Upland Organics. Cody and Allison, along with their three young sons, run the 4,500 acre mixed cattle operation and certified organic farm located at Wood Mountain. They manage land made up of annual crops, tame grass, and native prairie. They produce several high-quality crops, including pulses, cereals, and oil seeds. They added livestock to their operation in 2019, and their cattle now graze their cover crops.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, I introduced the winners of the 2025 Saskatchewan Outstanding Young Farmers award. Cody and Allison received that same award in 2022. At the national level, they were chosen as one of the two national winners that year.

Cody and Allison are creating a family-orientated, resilient operation which contributes positively to the local community and the agricultural community. I look forward to meeting them later to learn more about their operation, and I ask all members

to join me in welcoming Cody and Allison to this, their Legislative Assembly.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Mount Royal.

Trent Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to join with the Minister of Agriculture to welcome Cody Straza and Allison Squires to their Assembly. I've had the privilege of getting to know both of them a little bit, as they've been showcased through some of the agricultural organizations. Certainly they're incredible leaders in agriculture in this province. They've been recognized nationally as well.

This is sort of the epitome of producers in this province. That story of being the world's best producers and having such heart and soul that they put into their operation is just a wonderful story and something that we all want to celebrate. So on behalf of the official opposition, it's my honour to join with the minister and to celebrate Cody and Allison and welcome them to their Assembly.

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

Sally Housser: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd first like to join with the minister and my colleague in welcoming all the folks representing our energy industry here today. Thanks very much for the wonderful meeting with the Propane Association yesterday and the great conversation about the future of our resource sector here in Saskatchewan at the MLA reception last night. Thank you very much, and I'll ask all members to join me in giving one more round of applause.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, it's my great pleasure to welcome two constituents of mine to the legislature: Glen and Maureen Lee. I got a chance to know them through my nomination process, and they were wonderful volunteers on my campaign as well during this last election. So I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming Glen and Maureen to their legislature today.

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

Jacqueline Roy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to introduce you and the rest of the gallery today to some of our Wildcats from F.W. Johnson who are up in the gallery. Mr. Scott McKillop, an excellent teacher who I've had the privilege of working with in the past, is here with some of his students from grade 10 to see how things operate here in the legislature.

While I'm on my feet though, I also just want to put in a little plug for the only high school in my riding. They offer EAL [English as an additional language]. They offer VAP [vocational alternative program]. They offer modified programming, FIAP [functional integrated academic program], and a program that students from throughout Regina attend, which is the science, technology, engineering, art, and math program. Mr. Speaker, amazing programs — teacher-led, teacher-driven, and teacher-thought-up. Thank you.

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

Jared Clarke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with a few of my colleagues and just thank Scott and welcome Scott to his legislature. Scott's a constituent in Regina Walsh Acres, and it was wonderful to get to chat with him and his team yesterday. So I appreciate the work and advocacy that he does.

And I want to join with the member from Regina University in welcoming the Lees to their Legislative Assembly as well. I've known Glen and Maureen for many, many years through Nature Regina, and you won't find any more qualified or higher qualified botanists in the province, Mr. Speaker. These two fine folks have spent hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of hours documenting and cataloguing Saskatchewan plants in places like the Sand Hills, Grasslands National Park, Duck Mountain Provincial Park, and have really contributed in huge ways to botany in this province.

And because I am a birdwatcher, and I want to be able to talk about birds as much as I can in the Assembly at any chance, they also hosted a very rare sage thrasher over the winter last year, which was a very rare bird to show up in Regina during the winter. And it ate frozen grapes just outside of their window, and then we got to minus 40 and it disappeared. So it probably died, which was kind of sad, but that's the reality of life in winter in Saskatchewan.

So I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming both Glen and Maureen and also Scott to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

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

Joan Pratchler: — I would like to introduce you to some guests I have today in your gallery. They are from the Play & Discover Early Learning Centre. They are child care providers at Sask Polytech campus: Melanie Bacon and Caitlyn Anderson. So their organization has been around — they'd be one of the legacy ones — and they've been around for 50 years now. So join with me in welcoming them to their legislature.

And while I'm on my feet, I'd like to introduce another group. Je vous présente des gardiennes du Centre éducatif Gard'Amis. [Translation: I'd like to introduce you to some daycare workers from the Centre éducatif Gard'Amis.] It's a French daycare centre as well.

Je vous présente Madame Sylvie, Madame Mayssone, et Madame Youmna. Merci pour tous les travaux que vous faites dans les garderies.

[Translation: I'd like to introduce to you Ms. Sylvie, Ms. Mayssone, and Ms. Youmna. Thank you for all the work you do in daycares.]

They do good work with French in the daycare centre sector. Welcome to your legislature. Bienvenue, mesdames. [Translation: Welcome, ladies.]

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to join with the member opposite in introducing the guests in the gallery here this morning. Melanie and Caitlyn, nice to meet you. We met just briefly in the hallway as they were trying to find their way up to the Speaker's gallery. So thanks for the work you're doing in the early childhood sector. On behalf of the provincial government, welcome here to your Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Erika Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly calling for adequate and equitable SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] rates.

The undersigned residents wish to bring to your attention the following: that the Saskatchewan assured income disability program is a program for people with significant and enduring disabilities who have barriers to employment; that current SAID rates mean that individuals who rely on the program live well below the poverty line; that poverty has deepened because the SAID program has not seen an increase in the basic amount in over seven years and does not account for regional realities of the cost of living; that this failure to increase the program represents a decrease of 20 per cent of benefits since 2012; and that the provincial government has made cuts to additional benefits formerly available under the program such as the special diet benefits and rental supports. The provincial government engages in clawback policies that have been found to be discriminatory, such as the policy requiring individuals to apply for early CPP [Canada Pension Plan] and then clawing it back dollar for dollar; and that Saskatchewan people are struggling to make ends meet under historical inflationary pressures.

[10:15]

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly to call on the government to increase SAID rates to account for inflation; respect the constitutional rights of persons with disabilities by halting discriminatory practices; indexing the SAID rate basic amount to inflation going forward; and provide targeted relief to those in deepest poverty.

Constituents signing this petition reside in Saskatoon and Swift Current. I do so present.

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

April ChiefCalf: — 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.

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, 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. Disastrous changes to SIS

[Saskatchewan income support] and SAID 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.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately implement a comprehensive affordable housing strategy aimed at helping individuals and families in securing stable and affordable housing. This 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.

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

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

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling on the government to reverse the ban on third-party sex ed providers in schools.

Those who have signed this petition wish to bring to our attention the following: that banning third-party providers of education will mean fewer kids getting access to evidence-based sex education. But it didn't go just to that; it expanded way beyond and impacted additional prevention education programs, programs focused on body safety, consent, and healthy relationships — things which children should be learning about.

Mr. Speaker, third-party providers have always strived to provide the best education, with oversight from school boards. And all children have the right to comprehensive, age-appropriate sexual health education.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately reverse its decision to ban third-party sexual health educators in Saskatchewan schools and listen to experts and stakeholders in developing comprehensive sex education curriculum for all publicly funded schools.

Those who have signed this petition come from Regina. I do so present.

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

Betty Nippi-Albright: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present the following petition calling on the Saskatchewan Assembly of Saskatchewan to address the mental health and addictions crisis.

Residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to your attention the following. Saskatchewan has the highest suicide rate amongst the provinces at 18.1 per 100,000 people dying by suicide. Indigenous people die by suicide at a rate of 4.3 per cent higher than non-Indigenous people in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan continues to break its own records in overdose deaths, with 484 confirmed overdose deaths in 2023. One in four youth in Saskatchewan have reported having engaged in self-harm at some point, and one in four youth reported have considered suicide in the past year. Mr. Speaker, in the North — especially in the North — high suicide rates, high struggles with mental health and addictions.

So I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to work with experts and community leaders on evidence-based solutions to the mental health and addictions crisis in Saskatchewan.

The folks who signed this petition reside in Prince Albert. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Minerals Plant Contributes to Local Economy

James Thorsteinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise today to recognize an amazing milestone for a local company in Cut Knife-Turtleford. The Compass Minerals plant in Unity, producers of Sifto salt, celebrated their 75th anniversary this past spring.

Compass Minerals hosted two celebratory events. One was hosted May 28th. The team invited members of the public to tour the plant and enjoy a slide show outlining the history of their facility. On May 30th, 200 current and former plant employees had their own celebration with a tour, supper, and a chance to visit. Highlights of the tour included the assembly line where table salt is packaged into cartons, as well as the automated packaging of the water softener salt and the automatic pelletizer.

Mr. Speaker, Compass Minerals is not only an integral part of Unity and the surrounding area as an employer, but they also support local organizations with donations and volunteerism. Compass Minerals currently employs 52 people, Mr. Speaker. All employees are from Unity and the surrounding area, which in turn helps support local business.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this Assembly join me in congratulating Compass Minerals on their 75th anniversary of salt production, and I would like to thank them for their contributions to the community of Unity and its growing economy. Thank you.

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

Mobile Crisis Services Helps People in Need

Brent Blakley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I had the distinct honour to attend Mobile Crisis Services of Regina's anniversary gala evening. Along with my MLA colleague from Regina Northeast and the Minister of Social Services, we celebrated the great work that Mobile Crisis Services has been doing since 1974 — 50 years of serving Regina and surrounding communities. We were hosted by board Chair Curtis Kemp and executive director Dana Wilkins. The important work done by the workers and volunteers of Mobile Crisis was recognized and acknowledged.

Mobile Crisis offers a wide range of services, helping people in need that are experiencing their worst days. Mobile Crisis Services offers a mobile crisis helpline and e-counselling, call or walk-in services, crisis suicide helpline, child abuse line, Sask gambling helpline, and Farm Stress Line.

The impact Mobile Crisis has on our community cannot be understated, especially in these times of addiction and mental health crisis. It's never been more important for our communities to have access to safe and accessible crisis intervention.

I'd like to thank and acknowledge those who work and volunteer their time to carry out the great work that Mobile Crisis Services does each and every day.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Weyburn-Bengough.

Green Shirt Day Raises Awareness for Organ Donations

Michael Weger: — Mr. Speaker, on April 7th, 2018 Humboldt Bronco defenceman Logan Boulet passed away from his injuries sustained in the Humboldt Broncos bus crash. Logan's parents, Bernie and Toby Boulet, offered to donate their son's organs, which in turn saved six lives. Green Shirt Day was created to honour, remember, and recognize all the victims and families of the Humboldt Broncos bus crash and to continue Logan's legacy by inspiring Canadians to talk to their families and register as organ donors.

Green Shirt Day is a way to not only remind individuals to register but also to speak to others about organ donation. And my challenge, Mr. Speaker, is to not only wear a green shirt but to carry on that conversation, continue the Logan Boulet Effect, and inspire others to take the time to register their organ donation.

In Canada almost 90 per cent of Canadians say they support organ donation, but only 32 per cent have actually registered their intent to donate. Unfortunately this leaves approximately 250 Canadians that pass away each year while waiting for an organ transplant that doesn't come in time.

On April 7th let us remember the Humboldt Broncos. Let us continue the Logan Boulet Effect. And, Mr. Speaker, please, please don't take your organs to heaven. Heaven knows we need them here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Missinipi Broadcasting Corporation Showcases the North

Jordan McPhail: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Missinipi Broadcasting Corporation — or as we know it in the North, MBC Radio — has just celebrated its 40th anniversary this January. MBC Radio was started up to tell the story of the North when traditional media was not able to. They expanded and were one of the founding members of APTN [Aboriginal Peoples Television Network] Network as well, bringing the beautiful stories of the amazing people, culture, and events in northern Saskatchewan to Saskatchewan.

Today, MBC plays all of your favourite tunes, from classic rock to the newest pop hits. They have the Real People Playoffs, showcasing northern talent from all corners of Saskatchewan. For those who live in the North, it is a staple in every kohkom's house to have their radio tuned to MBC, keeping up to date with the latest news, weather, sports, and enjoying some of the great music northerners have to offer.

Not only do they do this work to showcase the North, but they also do it in the languages that northerners have grown up speaking: Cree, Dene, and English. MBC has given many opportunities to northern journalism, Indigenous-focused storytelling, and supported community musicians through their platform. MBC is now live on local radio in over 70 communities in Saskatchewan and also streams online.

I ask that all members join me in congratulating MBC News for their 40 years of northern journalism, music, and service to our province. Thank you, tēniki, and mahsi cho.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from White City-Qu'Appelle.

Teaching Award Recognizes Remarkable Educators

Brad Crassweller: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan's post-secondary sector is home to many dedicated educators who deserve recognition. Faculty and staff play a crucial role in delivering high-quality education, leaving a lasting impact on students' lives.

Mr. Speaker, our post-secondary educators are more than teachers. They're mentors who inspire creativity, curiosity, and a passion for lifelong learning. Their dedication helps students reach their full potential and prepares them to become the leaders of tomorrow. That's why our government, together with representatives from the post-secondary education sector, created Saskatchewan's first provincial award that recognizes remarkable educators for their dedication to student engagement and learning — the Lieutenant Governor's Post-Secondary Teaching Award.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to announce the nominations are now open for this prestigious award. Faculty and staff are invited to nominate their colleagues, helping recognize outstanding educators who inspire and engage students every day. Nominees should demonstrate a commitment to student engagement, a reflective approach to teaching, and dedication to continuous improvement. Nominations will close on June 30th of this year,

and recipients will be announced in the fall.

So, Mr. Speaker, please join me in celebrating Saskatchewan's post-secondary educators, their dedication to excellence in teaching, and their unwavering commitment to student success. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina South Albert.

Taxes and Affordability Crisis

Aleana Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Since the budget was released, the Sask Party government has celebrated their tax reductions as the answer to the affordability crisis here in Saskatchewan.

However this government fails to acknowledge that it was their party that implemented the largest tax hike in the history of Saskatchewan. That tax hike included a 1 per cent hike to the PST [provincial sales tax] and an expansion of the base that has people today paying PST on children's clothes, PST on restaurant meals, PST on insurance, PST on groceries, PST on used cars, PST on the labour used in home renovations. That single set of tax increases has resulted in over a billion dollars in new taxes that Saskatchewan people pay each and every year.

The measures touted by the government in this year's budget are less than 20 per cent of that single set of PST tax increases that they implemented at the start of this Premier's term. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party government has implemented another 23 separate tax increases over the past seven years.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government has essentially taxed the people of Saskatchewan into the present affordability crisis. New members, same old Sask Party math.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Oil and Gas Sector Benefits Saskatchewan

Chris Beaudry: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night the Canadian Propane Association, Canadian Association of Energy Contractors, Enserva, and the Explorers and Producers Association of Canada hosted MLAs from both sides here at the legislature.

[10:30]

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to Saskatchewan energy, our oil and gas sector is the top contributor to provincial GDP [gross domestic product]. They employ thousands of people across this province with good-paying jobs. Last year the sector produced nearly 450,000 barrels of oil per day, valued at \$13.5 billion, and our oil exports reached 12.9 billion in value for 2024. And we remain number one in Canada for investment attractiveness in the nation as ranked by the Fraser Institute.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday we received the news that the US [United States], our largest trading partner, has stayed their tariffs on Canada. Mark Scholz, the CEO [chief executive officer] of the

Canadian Association of Energy Contractors, had this to say:

The reason the US tariffs on Canada were stayed were a direct result of the diplomatic efforts of this Premier and this government. They talked to the right people and went about things the right way. Your government makes working in the energy sector easy. We know that you have a growth plan of 600,000 barrels by 2030, but we have a growth plan to exceed that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Trade Infrastructure and Government Response to Tariffs

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday Donald Trump announced his plans for tariffs. Now it seems that we've escaped the worst of it, at least for the moment. But, Mr. Speaker, we also can't pretend that everything is back to normal. The world economy is in chaos. Stock markets are in free fall. And this Sask Party government has left Saskatchewan people without protections, with no contingency.

Why did the Sask Party leave Saskatchewan people so exposed? Mr. Speaker, how is that leadership?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, the only part of that question I do agree with is that this tariff fight isn't over. Mr. Speaker, we can't take it easy. We have to continue the advocacy work, the great work done by our Premier and premiers across this country.

Mr. Speaker, this measured approach, combined with aggressive advocacy and engagement with American officials, I believe — I think most people believe — is what left us relatively unscathed yesterday. But again we can't rest on that. We have to continue that approach. We have to continue to work hard. That's why we have the eight-point plan. That's why we're going to continue looking for more export markets.

This is a serious matter, Mr. Speaker, but while the NDP [New Democratic Party] were pulling the fire alarm, we were working to prevent the fire.

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

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday we saw just how vulnerable we are to the whims of Donald Trump, waiting with bated breath to hear about the fate of thousands of jobs and entire industries. And, Mr. Speaker, we can never be in that same position again. We need trade-enabling infrastructure to get our products to market to make our economy less reliant on the whims of the White House.

When will we see action, Mr. Speaker, to get the pipelines, rail lines, and power lines built once and for all?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, it's hard to know whether to laugh or cry at that question. For years now the federal and provincial NDP have opposed pipelines across this country. On trade infrastructure, it's a matter of record in *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — Oh, I certainly stood up at the wrong time there. I'd ask the member to apologize and withdraw. Sorry, it's pretty clear.

Trent Wotherspoon: — I would withdraw and apologize.

Speaker Goudy: — I would ask that when questions are being posed, we would all listen. And that when answers are being given, we would all listen.

I recognize the Minister of Finance, the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, it's a matter of record in *Hansard*. Virtually every trade mission that the Premier went on, the members opposite opposed it. They called it junkets. They called it a waste of money. Mr. Speaker, they don't want to listen to the answer now.

Every minister that went on a trade mission, Mr. Speaker, they opposed it. Every trade office that we opened, they opposed it. And now suddenly they go, hey, you know what, we should have more export markets than just the United States.

What a great idea, Mr. Speaker.

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

Government Procurement and US Contracts

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, clearly now is the time to wean ourselves off of dependence on the United States. And the Sask Party government has a golden opportunity right in front of them, Mr. Speaker.

On April the 1st, 2018, this government signed a seven-year contract with LifeLabs to provide community lab services. As of Tuesday that contract is up. Is the government planning to extend its contract with LifeLabs? Or are they looking for a Canadian company to provide those services?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I've said on previous days in this House and in committee earlier this week, we're going to be reviewing our procurement in all areas of the health care system.

However what comes first is access to care for patients, Mr. Speaker. We are in continued, ongoing discussions with LifeLabs about their contract, Mr. Speaker. We are reviewing all of our procurement options, but at the end of the day, patient care is number one. Thank you.

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

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, when they signed that contract in 2018, LifeLabs was a Canadian company. But last July they were taken over by Quest Diagnostics, an American company.

The minister has known for 10 months that they are an American-owned company. Will he stand by the promise to seek out providers at home? Or is he going to back a New Jersey-based company?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — I can tell the Leader of the Opposition what I am going to do. I am going to make sure that residents in Regina and Saskatoon, when it comes to lab services, have continued access to those services, Mr. Speaker.

We understand, Mr. Speaker, that in the health care system we procure services from many different companies across North America. It goes to show how integrated supply chains are in many sectors, including health care. As I previously said, we're going to be reviewing our procurement. We're in ongoing discussions with the current contractor. But at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, continuation of services is what we are looking forward to and prioritizing for patients in this province. Thank you.

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

Meara Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ah yes, it's all about the people, Mr. Speaker. Except since 2016 when the Sask Party government decided to hive off yet another aspect of our public health care system to big companies, LifeLabs has donated nearly \$30,000 to the Sask Party. Not a bad deal for them. And it would seem that now their contract has been quietly extended without a competitive process.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question to the Health minister is this: when did it become okay to dole out government contracts to big Sask Party donors?

Speaker Goudy: — I'm just going to remind the member that accusations, like of this type, though they're posed as a question, are offside. So I'll ask the member to re-pose the final portion of your question.

Meara Conway: — Does the Minister of Health think it's okay to award public contracts without a competitive process to companies that have donated nearly \$30,000 to his political party?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. At the end of the day, contributions politically have no bearing on how we deliver contracts to service the people . . . Mr. Speaker, we are talking about contracts that deliver important and essential services to the people of this province. Unfortunately that member chooses to rise in this House and make accusations that are not true and are out of line with what we are working to deliver for people of this province. Thank you.

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

Meara Conway: — Mr. Speaker, I've simply stated the facts. If he doesn't like the facts then they shouldn't do it, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, this isn't just any Sask Party donor. This is an American-based Sask Party donor, one that also, incidentally, donates to the Republicans, Mr. Speaker. So I guess a Sask Party-donating American multinational wins again.

To the minister: when will this Sask Party government stop prioritizing American companies that donate to them and start fighting for the people of this province?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, the whole point of counter-tariffs or revisiting procurement is to equally hurt the American economy as the tariffs hurt the Canadian economy. Mr. Speaker, nothing is going to hurt the American economy more than what Donald Trump did to himself yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we don't react in a way that's going to hurt our economy, hurt our citizens. We are taking a measured approach. Our Premier's taking a measured approach with other premiers and the federal government across the country.

You saw the response today, Mr. Speaker. This advocacy is working. Once again, the NDP wanted to pull the fire alarm. We're trying to prevent the fire.

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

Meara Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A meek and weak response from that minister. I mean this really is a trifecta of Sask Party failures. One, an example of privatizing our beloved health care system; two, a lucrative contract awarded to a major donor without a competitive process; and now three, doubling down on doing business with an American company that props up Donald Trump, a convicted felon, someone who's wreaking havoc on jobs, stability, and peace across the world, someone who has threatened to make us the 51st state, Mr. Speaker. It's stunning.

So can someone, anyone over there tell me why does this Sask Party government, this Premier, continue to put the interests of their donors and their fringe MAGA [Make America Great Again] fan club over the interests of . . .

Speaker Goudy: — Okay, I am going to rule that question out of order. You cannot be saying that this party is putting the interests of their donors ahead of the province. And I would ask you to move on from this line of questioning . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You have as many questions as you would like so you may pose another question, absolutely.

I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Meara Conway: — When will this Sask Party government stop awarding public contracts to American companies — ones that incidentally donate not only to their party but also the

Republicans — and instead prioritize local Canadian companies and jobs?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of politics right now over the last five minutes. Let's get back to patients. Let's get back to patients, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the contract for LifeLabs was awarded through a competitive process which has extension options as part of that contract. As I have said previously, as I have said in regards to this contract and other contracts that we have in our health care system, we will absolutely review procurement options. But what we are not going to do is to risk continuity of access for patients to important services in this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Child Care Agreement with Federal Government

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are still waiting for this government to sign on to the federal child care deal, like 11 other Canadian jurisdictions have already done.

In February the minister said they needed more time. In March the minister said he needed to negotiate the details. Now in the House this week, the minister is saying he won't be able to negotiate for another month due to the federal election.

I ask the minister: which is it? Are you negotiating now or not? And will the critical child care needs of families continue to be ignored? Can you at least give them a straight answer, Mr. Minister?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this year's provincial budget there is \$413.3 million, an increase of \$4.6 million, which includes the federal-provincial early learning and child care agreements. And that is funding that is dedicated towards early years and child care here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said multiple times to that member and to other members opposite, as I've said publicly as well, Saskatchewan remains ready to negotiate. And we've expressed that. I've expressed that directly to the previous federal minister, the current federal minister who is in charge.

[10:45]

As I said previously, Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to have that negotiation at any point in time, understanding of course that there is a federal election that's currently under way. But if they were to reach out to us — and we have had our officials in contact with them on a regular basis — but if they were to reach out to us today certainly we'd be prepared to have that discussion, have those negotiations, Mr. Speaker.

The existing arrangement provides for funding to the end of March 31st of 2026, and we feel that there is plenty of time to make sure that we renegotiate a deal that is best for Saskatchewan

families and for Saskatchewan child care operators. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Oh, heavens. So many excuses I've lost count. One reason this minister gave for not signing the child care deal was that he wanted to include . . .

Speaker Goudy: — I would just ask that the decorum in the Chamber on both sides improve. We have 10 minutes left. Please.

I recognize the member from Regina Rochdale.

Joan Pratchler: — One reason the minister gave for not signing the child care deal was that he wanted it to include more for-profit child care centres. Last time I checked into the data there are almost zero, no for-profit child care centres in Saskatchewan. Simple question: does the minister understand the urgency of this?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to continue to repeat what I have said multiple times to that member opposite for two-plus weeks now here in this Chamber about how this arrangement works and how the agreement does not expire. There are funds in place until March 31st, 2026.

This government is prepared to renegotiate a deal that is better for Saskatchewan families and for child care operators. As I have said previously, Mr. Speaker, there are other provinces that are facing this challenge too. I'm reading media stories just yesterday where parents and other provinces are calling the current program a disaster.

We want to try to make sure that we're making improvements. We know this is an important program, Mr. Speaker. Affordable child care is a priority for parents, for operators right across this province. We know how important that is, which is why it's important for us to not just sign an extension of the existing deal without having a negotiation with the federal government to say how can we address some of the gaps that are there to make this better, to make it a permanent, long-term, sustainable program for parents in Saskatchewan, for child care operators here in Saskatchewan for months and years into the future, Mr. Speaker.

We're prepared to make those negotiations. As an example, we recently signed the national school food program agreement with the federal government providing millions of dollars to this province over the next three years. We want to be able to do the same, to negotiate in good faith with the federal government when it comes to child care as well, Mr. Speaker.

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

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our official opposition has received hundreds, nearly thousands of calls and emails and inquiries from the people of Saskatchewan regarding our tenuous child care situation. They ask us why, why do our stakeholders continue to feel ignored, and why do the real

benefits of affordable child care go unrecognized?

If the minister can't give me an answer, maybe he could give some of the providers here in the gallery today a straight answer. And I suggest maybe he also look in the cameras in this Chamber and tell families directly why he's not listening to them.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Myself and this government have been listening to child care operators, to families right across this province. I've been meeting and engaging with child care operators, spoke to one on budget day, Mr. Speaker.

I've met with SECA [Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association] on a couple of occasions, talked to others, toured child care facilities, had these conversations about what's working with the current funding arrangement, with the current \$10-a-day child care program, but also where there are challenges, Mr. Speaker, not just in this province but recognizing, of course, that there are other provinces and territories that have identified some issues with this.

We want to be able to consider certain things like Manitoba currently has, where the age-out for children is at seven, not at six, what we have here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Again we are prepared and willing to renegotiate a new deal with the federal government when it comes to child care and to make sure that this is a long-term, affordable, sustainable program for families, for child care operators here in Saskatchewan. I've indicated that in numerous meetings, in written correspondence to the federal government. And we are prepared to negotiate as soon as they are, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I'm just going to clarify the rules, that we're not allowed to be engaging with the members in the gallery during debate.

I recognize the member from Regina Rochdale.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we get up every day and we ask over and over and over about this government and when they're going to get with the program. Affordable child care is good for families, it's good for the economy, it's good for our future, and it's critical for Saskatchewan.

No more excuses. When is the job of signing this deal going to happen? Because the people that depend on child care need a date, and they need it pronto.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Mr. Speaker, the year is 2025. The current arrangement, the current agreement does not expire until March 31st of 2026. We feel that there is plenty of time to have a negotiation with the federal government on . . . [inaudible] . . . a better child care program for this province, Mr. Speaker.

Other provinces have, yes, some have signed, but other provinces have also reached back to the federal government to say, we

would like to renegotiate some of the clauses that we felt we had to sign very hastily. Mr. Speaker, that was our concern from the beginning. We had a meeting of federal, provincial, and territorial ministers and officials back in late November where this was not on the agenda, and what was not discussed was the extension and what the next version of this agreement would look like.

On February 6th, the then federal minister of Jobs and Families writes to provinces, writes to Saskatchewan and says, we want to begin negotiations now, but you have two weeks. And when our officials reached out to the government, the federal government, there was an indication from them that they were not willing to renegotiate. It was simply, sign this deal as is. And we knew full well, based on feedback we've heard from operators, we do need to make some changes to the program, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Questions in Legislative Committees and Advocacy for the North

Jordan McPhail: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, people in northern Saskatchewan have sent the member from Athabasca and I to represent them here in this legislature, to ask real questions about the ways that this Sask Party government is failing northern people.

I tried to get answers out of the Minister of Government Relations, but he wouldn't answer my questions. He shifted the blame, passed the buck, and refused to take responsibility. When will the Minister of Government Relations take some responsibility for the problems in northern Saskatchewan?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the rules and procedures of the Legislative Assembly are very clear. They apply in this Assembly and they apply in committee. These rules are not new, and they are the responsibility of all members of this Assembly to know and to abide by.

All that happened earlier this week in committee, Mr. Speaker, is that the members of the opposition failed to come prepared with questions for the appropriate minister. Mr. Speaker, the ministers are happy to answer any questions that pertain to their files. As always, the members opposite have 75 hours to debate these bills, and we encourage the members opposite to come prepared for committee and ask appropriate questions to the appropriate ministers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Jordan McPhail: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will take absolutely zero lessons from any member opposite on how to stand up for northern people.

Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the minister of his full title: Minister of Government Relations; Minister Responsible for First Nations, Métis and Northern Affairs. He's also the Minister Responsible for the Provincial Capital Commission. He should be ready to answer questions about what's going in the North — health care,

education, seniors' care, highways, mental health and addiction, suicide crisis. The list goes on and on. The list of places where this Sask Party government is failing the people of the North is long. And the Sask Party's list of accomplishments after almost two decades in office is awfully short.

When will this minister take the responsibility for his file and start standing up for the North?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Government Relations will answer any question pertaining to his file . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — I am going to ask that during the answers that we remain quiet in the Chamber, please.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. He will take questions responding to any issue regarding his file and at committee any issue regarding his budget.

The member opposite clearly stated that he's asking questions about health. He's asking questions about highways. He's asking questions about justice. We have ministries and ministers who have those files, Mr. Speaker. If the members opposite wish to ask questions of government ministers, I encourage them to ask the appropriate minister at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Addressing Homelessness

April ChiefCalf: — "I think it's incredibly sad that our province has dropped the ball so fantastically on helping the homeless in this province and in this city." That's what Saskatoon councillor Robert Pearce said in a recent city council meeting. And I have to agree with him.

We are in a massive housing crisis, and the drug crisis in my city has claimed so many lives. Last year 72 people died of drug overdoses. This year there have been at least 58 deaths and it's only April. Why does this government continue to drop the ball so fantastically?

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

Hon. Terry Jenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue of homelessness is a very complex issue, and it's one that we take extremely seriously, Mr. Speaker.

Our \$40.2 million provincial approach to homeless plan, among other initiatives, provides new supportive housing units with on-site supports. And in this year's budget we're investing an additional \$5 million into the rental development program for housing providers to develop even more supportive housing units.

Individuals find themselves in this unfortunate situation of being

homeless for several different reasons. They're all individuals. We know from point-in-time counts in Saskatoon, the most recent one, Mr. Speaker, 82 per cent of people that are homeless have fallen into a life of substance abuse and addiction. Further to that, another 60 per cent of individuals have reported a mental health issue.

So in addition to expanding our housing capacity across the province, with a focus on Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert, we're taking a comprehensive approach with other ministries: the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety. Our government will continue to deliver the appropriate supports needed to address homelessness and give individuals the best opportunity to recover and lead healthy, independent lives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Weyburn-Bengough.

Cost of Living and Affordability Measures

Michael Weger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to start this 75-minute debate by confirming what an absolute honour and privilege it is to come to this building each day to do the work that we do in this building, Mr. Speaker. And I even say this after having spent over 44 hours in this building in the last three days, Mr. Speaker. But hey, I'm the one that wanted to become an MLA.

I chose to become an MLA with optimism that I would do right by the people that elected me, Mr. Speaker. I didn't come here expecting to change the world or even this province, but I came here with the humble and modest goal of making it better. The goal was to keep this province on course, to make sure for as long as I'm elected this province continues to be the absolutely best place in the country to live, work, and raise a family.

What a great feeling, Mr. Speaker, to know that as part of this government, with our recently passed budget, I am doing just that. What a great feeling to be able to vote in favour of a budget put together by our Minister of Finance that makes life more affordable for everyone in the province. What a great feeling to pass a budget that once again includes over \$2 billion in affordability measures.

Now there's lots of talk about feeling in this speech, Mr. Speaker. And the source of that is actually that I overheard the Minister of Justice the other day softly singing the song "I Gotta Feeling" by the Black Eyed Peas in his chair in the Chamber here. So the minister maybe didn't realize that I'm paying so close attention to his every move and word, and maybe things are getting a little creepy here, Mr. Speaker, but I hope he takes it as a compliment. I have a lot to learn, and I think if I take my lead from the Minister of Justice, I'll probably do okay here.

[11:00]

Anyways, back to the song, Mr. Speaker. The song says, "I got a

feeling that tonight's going to be a good night." Well as I drove down Albert Street at 11 p.m. after leaving here on Monday, March 31st, I was looking at the fuel signs at the gas stations. They're all lit up — 159.9 cents a litre. And I said to myself, "I got a feeling tonight's going to be a good night" because later that night, Mr. Speaker, the attendees at the fuel stations climbed their ladder, so to speak, and took 18 cents off that fuel price.

And what a great feeling to know that it was this Sask Party government that led the fight against the federal carbon tax from day one, Mr. Speaker, from day one when our leader, and at that time the minister of Environment, walked out of a meeting of provincial environment ministers back in October of 2016 following the announcement of the carbon tax. And what a great feeling, I'm sure, for our Premier last week as he was able to announce that as of April 1st, Saskatchewan would be entirely carbon tax-free.

And on Tuesday morning, Mr. Speaker, as I drove back down Albert Street at 8 a.m., the price of gas was down to 141.9 cents a litre. And I said to myself, "Today is going to be a good, good day." The federal carbon tax was removed from fuel and on the same day our provincial government was completing the removal of carbon tax off everything for everyone. What a great feeling.

Now it's a bit cliché to say that it takes my breath away when I run up the stairs of this great building every day, Mr. Speaker, but I'm worried that the feeling may pass, so I've been trying to take time to really take it all in. Just the other day, myself and the member from Prince Albert Carlton were admiring the wood carvings in this great Chamber. And yesterday at lunch I was admiring the carving on the pediment above the main doors to this building. That carving, Mr. Speaker, was designed to express the hope for this building. The hope was that the laws and decisions made inside this building would benefit everyone.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to report that our government's affordability measures benefit everyone. The over \$2 billion in affordability measures included in our budget will benefit everyone. And the cutting of the carbon tax on everything benefits everyone.

The artisan designers created expectations back in 1914 for us when they created the carving above the front doors, and our government is living up to those expectations.

I think before I go any further into reviewing all of our affordability measures, Mr. Speaker, I need to review what makes these measures possible. Proper fiscal management makes these measures possible. A strong focus on supporting and fostering our economy makes these measures possible. Building international trade relationships makes these measures possible.

Our province has the second-lowest net debt-to-GDP among all of the provinces. And this is a very important statistic, Mr. Speaker. Investors look for stability and certainty when looking for a jurisdiction to invest in, and low net debt-to-GDP is a great signal. Basically with this statistic in hand our province is standing up, waving its arms to the world saying, look over here. Look at us. Come here and do business.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? Those investors are coming. They are taking advantage of the incentives offered by our

government. Those businesses are creating great-paying jobs, hiring employees, making profits, and paying taxes. Our total provincial revenue is forecast to be \$21.1 billion, which is a 6 per cent increase from the previous budget. It is this revenue that supports our affordability measures.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I learned a phrase from my parents at an early age: money doesn't grow on trees. Well it definitely didn't in any of the trees that our family owned, anyways. What I have learned in life, Mr. Speaker, is that you have to put in the work, dig up the ground, plant the seed, water the tree, and then sell the fruit, Mr. Speaker. This government is putting in the work every day to make sure the tree bears fruit so that we can fulfill our affordability commitments to the residents of Saskatchewan.

On April 1st, Mr. Speaker, as a government we took affordability measures one step further when our government cut the carbon tax on everything for everyone. We eliminated the carbon tax on everything, and that has created a great competitive environment for businesses in our province, businesses like Evraz, that saved millions of dollars with this cut.

In addition to supporting the businesses in our province, we've eliminated the carbon tax to give an immediate positive impact on the affordability for citizens in the province.

My apologies to the birdwatching member opposite from Regina Walsh Acres for the metaphor, but essentially we killed two birds with one stone, Mr. Speaker. The removal of carbon tax on electricity saves everyone money. If you pay your own power bill you will save money. For lots of homeowners it's likely 10 to \$20 a month or more. If you don't own your home, your rent or condo fees might not go down, but there will be less pressure for them to increase with the savings realized by condo boards and landlords.

Everything you buy or consume will be affected by no carbon tax on electricity, and all service providers will be saving on their electricity bills. Whether you are at the grocery store or getting your hair cut, Mr. Speaker, everyone benefits. Okay, small correction. According to my math, twenty-three and a half per cent of our caucus members don't have any hair to cut, Mr. Speaker. So not everyone benefits, but you get the idea.

I don't have enough time in this 15-minute speech to tell you about everyone that benefits from our Government of Saskatchewan affordability measures, but I will take the time to tell you about someone. That someone is Kelly from Yellow Grass. Kelly's a single mom raising a young son. Her young son, by the way, Mr. Speaker, heck of a hockey player. Well Kelly will benefit from the reduction in her personal income tax payable as a result of the increase to the personal and dependent child exemptions.

As mentioned, Kelly put her son in hockey, Mr. Speaker, and the doubling of the active families benefit will put \$300 back in Kelly's pocket to refund her for a portion of her hockey registration fees. What if Kelly had moved to BC [British Columbia] or, God forbid, Manitoba? No active family benefit in BC and she would only qualify for a \$54 fitness credit in Manitoba.

Our government is also increasing the community rink

affordability grant so that Kelly's local rink will receive \$5,000 next year, with the grant going up from \$2,500 to 5,000. And that helps keep user fees lower and ensures there is a rink still operational in Yellow Grass. This grant also helps to ensure that the other nearby rinks that her son plays hockey in can also stay operational so they can travel to close communities like Milestone, Ogema, Avonlea, and even Lang, which keeps the sport of hockey more affordable for more people. In my constituency 11 communities benefited from \$45,000, and that total will rise to 90,000 next year.

In the town of Yellow Grass the municipal revenue-sharing dollars will help keep Kelly's property tax affordable on her home. And our government is not increasing the education property tax. As far as utilities are concerned Kelly enjoys some of the lowest utility rates in the country. In BC she would be paying 12 per cent PST on her natural gas bill and if she was in Manitoba, she would be paying 7 per cent PST on her utilities. In Saskatchewan she doesn't pay any PST on her utilities.

If Kelly wanted to do a renovation to her home, she will now be able to claim up to \$4,000 benefit through the home renovation tax credit. Kelly also has to drive to work in Weyburn, where she benefits from the lowest automobile insurance rates in the country.

Now at her place of employment, Kelly's employer is not subject to 1.95 per cent payroll tax seen in British Columbia, or the 2.15 per cent payroll tax seen in Manitoba. So hopefully this results in higher wages and maybe even a nice piece of Hillberg & Berk jewellery for her at Christmas.

And at her workplace, Kelly's friends and co-workers also recognize many of the same benefits as Kelly. Take her friend Melissa, for example, also an awesome hockey mom. Well her family of four will take advantage of the highest tax-free threshold in Canada by paying no provincial income tax on their first \$63,200 of combined income with the threshold increasing to \$71,165.

Now I don't have enough time to cover all of the savings, but again we're covering off the single mom. We're covering off the family of four. We've got affordability measures for students. We've got affordability measures for seniors. And we've got affordability measures for the most vulnerable.

Just the other day, Mr. Speaker, I heard the member for Lumsden-Morse. He was telling a story and you could see the feeling in his expressions of a recent email he had received from a constituent thanking him for the increase in the seniors' care home benefit, an extra thousand dollars going a long ways to helping his constituent afford the care home.

Now I would hope the members opposite can see the merit in this motion that I will move. And in doing so, I would ask them to support the affordability measures we have put in place, measures we have put in place for the benefit of Kelly, and as I mentioned, for the benefit of everyone.

So I will read the motion, Mr. Speaker. I move:

That this Assembly support the Government of Saskatchewan for its record of consistent and meaningful

affordability measures, including but not limited to over \$2 billion in affordability measures included with every budget; cutting the carbon tax on everything for everyone; reducing personal income tax by raising the personal, spousal, and dependant child exemptions, and raising the seniors' supplement by \$500; increasing the disability tax credit by 25 per cent; increasing the caregiver tax credit by 25 per cent; increasing the monthly income assistance benefit for SAID and SIS clients; increasing the low-income tax credit by 20 per cent over the next four years; increasing the personal care home benefit; offering a refundable tax credit of 50 per cent towards fertility treatments; doubling the active families benefit; increasing the graduate retention program's maximum tax credit by 20 per cent; reinstating the home renovation tax credit; increasing the Saskatchewan first-time homebuyers tax credit; permanently maintaining the small-business tax rate at 1 per cent; and introducing the Saskatchewan class 1 truck driver training rebate program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the member from Weyburn-Bengough:

That this Assembly support the Government of Saskatchewan for its record of consistent and meaningful affordability measures, including but not limited to over \$2 billion in affordability measures included with every budget; cutting the carbon tax on everything for everyone; reducing personal income tax by raising the personal, spousal, and dependant child exemptions, and raising the seniors' supplement by \$500; increasing the ability tax credit by 25 per cent; increasing the caregiver tax credit by 25 per cent; increasing monthly income assistance benefits for SAID and SIS clients; increasing the Saskatchewan low-income tax credit by 20 per cent over the next four years; increasing the personal care home benefit; offering a refundable tax credit of 50 per cent towards fertility treatments; doubling the active families benefit; increasing the graduate retention program's maximum tax credit by 20 per cent; reinstating the home renovation tax credit; increasing the Saskatchewan first-time homebuyers tax credit; permanently maintaining the small-business tax rate at 1 per cent; and introducing the Saskatchewan class 1 truck driver training rebate program.

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

[11:15]

Trent Witherspoon: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter into the debate here this afternoon, and I appreciate the member from Weyburn-Bengough, Mr. Speaker, a new member in this Assembly. I like chatting hockey with him. He's a good Red Wings guy there in Weyburn, good local hockey guy, good person. Little misguided, though, Mr. Speaker. I think he took, you know, a line here from the member from Meadow Lake or something and bought 'er hook, line, and sinker.

Because the unfortunate reality, Mr. Speaker, is of course the government that he's joined, Mr. Speaker . . . And of course he's

new in here, new. I don't question his intent at all, Mr. Speaker. I know he wants to do good things. But the government that he's joined just couldn't have been more offside and out of touch with the cost of living that Saskatchewan people have been facing.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, far worse than sitting on their hands or doing nothing, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that simply stuck Saskatchewan people with the costs and greater tax hikes and greater costs on front after front, time and time again when the stakes have been so high for Saskatchewan people. Families that have been facing a once-in-a-generation cost-of-living challenge, Mr. Speaker, have had those costs added to their household bills by this government, Mr. Speaker.

And I know the member means well, Mr. Speaker. But when I see the motion itself, it is laughable, Mr. Speaker. It is laughable. The words here, Mr. Speaker, you know — and bear with me here — is that they say they've been consistent and meaningful by way of affordability measures, Mr. Speaker.

Now nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. And any Saskatchewan household of course, Mr. Speaker, knows the reality of this tax-and-squander government, Mr. Speaker, that stuck them with the bills, Mr. Speaker, that sat on their hands during an affordability crisis, but worse than that, piled on with fee hikes and costs on front after front after front.

So nothing is further from reality, Mr. Speaker, than a motion to suggest that that government there — tax and squander, sticking Saskatchewan people with the bills, Mr. Speaker — has been providing some sort of affordability for Saskatchewan families in consistent and meaningful ways. Nothing further from reality, Mr. Speaker.

And a government that increasingly is detached from not just reality but also their own record here now, Mr. Speaker, detached from reality of the families right across this province, whether they be in Weyburn or Regina Mount Royal or up in Nipawin, Mr. Speaker, or in rural communities in between or on the farms, Mr. Speaker. A government that has stuck Saskatchewan people with the costs of their mismanagement, their scandals, their waste, Mr. Speaker.

We know this government, when it comes to the finances, couldn't run a two-house paper route, Mr. Speaker. And we see that in the numbers, Mr. Speaker. We see the debt has quadrupled, Mr. Speaker, and we see Saskatchewan people bearing those costs. We see it directly with debt servicing from that balloon debt now, Mr. Speaker, over 38 billion, going over \$1 billion a year and piling on year after year after year.

And then we see the direct cost, Mr. Speaker, of a government that has chosen to stick Saskatchewan people with the costs of their mismanagement at the same time as very callous choices, Mr. Speaker, when we look at some of the most vulnerable.

And this motion itself actually identifies I think \$20 a month that those on SAID will receive, Mr. Speaker, as something to be celebrated. This is a government that gutted SIS, Mr. Speaker, that left many without a home, that pushed people into a more precarious situation.

Now the reality for Saskatchewan people — and you know it if

you talk to families; you know it if you go door to door; you know it if you're sitting together with communities — the cost-of-living pressures and hardship are real. People have been working so damned hard just to put food on the table and pay the bills or secure that housing and the better future for their families, many falling further and further behind, with a government who hasn't had their backs but has made things worse, Mr. Speaker.

So if you're in touch with people you should know that reality, Mr. Speaker. If you're not in touch with reality, Mr. Speaker, evidence — you know, exhibit A, front bench of that operation over there, that out-of-touch lot, I know knows how to read polling, Mr. Speaker. And what they should be able to see in that polling is that right there with Angus Reid, Saskatchewan has the highest levels of economic stress and anxiety in the country. That for many years now Saskatchewan unfortunately has led the way with Saskatchewan people facing the highest level of financial hardship, anxiety, and stress, Mr. Speaker. And that manifests in really awful ways in houses across this beautiful province, Mr. Speaker.

This government, of course their record certainly not as it says in this motion — like, I can't believe it — “consistent, meaningful affordability measures.” It's been tax and squander time and time again, Mr. Speaker. That's the record.

Let's look back. Of course this is the government that brought the biggest tax hike in Saskatchewan's history, Mr. Speaker, when they hiked the PST. And they stuck it on pretty much everything, Mr. Speaker. And this is a government, if you look back at that record, which is a fact, Mr. Speaker, they're now taking three times the amount of PST from Saskatchewan families. Back before those changes, \$1 billion in PST. Now it's \$3 billion they're taking.

I hear the Finance minister heckling from the very back, Mr. Speaker, with that very flawed budget, of course, that he's presented to Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker. And again for it being out of touch, Mr. Speaker, and not stepping up to the challenge — exhibit B, the Finance minister who's heckling from his seat, Mr. Speaker.

So with the PST, they're now taking three times what they were before. What does that look like in the average household? If you look at the government, well that minister's own intercity tables at the back of the budget, Saskatchewan families were paying just over \$1,000 in PST before that. Now they're paying well over \$1,000 more each and every year. Just think about that, Mr. Speaker, paying \$1,000 more each and every year.

And of course they stuck that PST onto things like children's clothes, to groceries, onto recreation, onto construction labour — something that was a gut-punch to growth and a real job-killing tax. And that drove up the cost of home ownership and home maintenance and even the cost of renting, Mr. Speaker, because of course the PST is paid by the owner there, Mr. Speaker, in maintaining and building that infrastructure. In restaurants and insurance and used cars, Mr. Speaker.

I don't have enough time left, when I look at the clock, to continue to share the consistent and damaging measures of this government when it comes to attacking the cost of living and making it so much worse for Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker.

Taxes, way up under this government. The cost of housing, way up under this government, Mr. Speaker. The cost of tuition for those that are trying to build a better future and build this beautiful province, way up, Mr. Speaker. The cost of food, Mr. Speaker, way up. And a government that, when you look at food, they had an opportunity to lean in to addressing meat pricing fairness, something that would provide fairness for livestock producers in this province and fairness for consumers, a real win-win. They even failed there, Mr. Speaker.

So on front after front this is a government that, worse than missing in action when it comes to the cost-of-living hardship families are facing, they've made it worse every step of the way, Mr. Speaker.

We see the current government here now bring forward a budget with no commitments around meaningful programs, as well around \$10-a-day child care. Just not able to get the job done for Saskatchewan families, Mr. Speaker. But this is a government that's been out of touch with the reality that families face with the cost of living for far too long.

We're going to continue to fight against unfair taxes — like the carbon tax, as we have, Mr. Speaker, to see it removed, as it has, Mr. Speaker. And here in this Assembly we're going to continue to fight this tax-and-squander Sask Party government and their record, Mr. Speaker, their consistent record of sticking Saskatchewan people with the costs and higher taxes and higher fees when they deserve some peace of mind and a little bit of relief, Mr. Speaker.

We have a beautiful province. It's unfair to the people we represent in any one of our communities to deny the realities that families face. We owe it to all of them, whether we're in Weyburn or Nipawin or Regina Mount Royal or rural communities, north or south, Mr. Speaker. We owe it to them to step up, to identify the reality and step up to the challenges. This government's failed on both fronts, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Moosomin-Montmartre.

Kevin Weedmark: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have 10 minutes to speak to this motion, but I could speak for 10 hours on the significant efforts this government has taken to ensure Saskatchewan remains the most affordable place to live in Canada. And people who know me, Mr. Speaker, know that I'm not exaggerating when I say I could speak for 10 hours on this or a few other topics.

Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign last fall, many people raised the issue of affordability. They said they appreciate the efforts that this government has taken on affordability and they wanted to see further moves on that issue.

Mr. Speaker, this government listens and this government delivers. This government has delivered affordability measures that have made life more affordable for every family, for every individual in this province. Affordability's an important issue for Saskatchewan people and I've spoken to many, many people who do appreciate the efforts this government has taken on affordability.

Mr. Speaker, I know many people who have come to Canada and chose to live in Saskatchewan to contribute to our communities, to contribute to our economy, to build their future here, to build their lives here — in part because it is the most affordable place to live in Canada.

I know many people who live in my riding. I know some of them very, very well, Mr. Speaker, who have told me that when coming to Canada, they looked at the cost of living in Saskatchewan, compared it with some other areas of the country, and are living in Saskatchewan now and building our communities now because it is affordable. They chose to live here in Saskatchewan because of affordability.

Part of that is because of utility costs. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's total utility bundle costs remain the second lowest in Canada. This came up in a discussion just this week. I was speaking to a family just this week who were telling me how much of a difference the changes to the personal care home benefit is going to make for them. They said it's going to make a world of difference for a family member. This year's budget includes a \$10 million investment to increase the personal care home benefit by \$1,000 to \$3,500 a month to help make the cost of living in a licensed personal care home more affordable for seniors. This family and others I've spoken to say that this has made a real difference for people.

And with this particular family we ended up having a discussion on affordability in general. They've noticed a difference when talking to relatives who live in other parts of the country. They see that Saskatchewan is affordable. And one reason for that is our affordable utilities. For their total utility bundle, the average Saskatchewan family will pay over \$400 less than a family in British Columbia, over \$2,500 less than a family in New Brunswick, over \$3,900 less than a family in Ontario, and over \$4,000 less than a family in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, when taxes, utilities, and housing costs are combined, our province is the most affordable place to live in Canada for a family of four.

Mr. Speaker, a family of four pays no provincial income tax on the first \$63,200 of combined income, the highest tax-free threshold in Canada. And this threshold is going to increase every single year for the next four years. And, Mr. Speaker, keeping life affordable improves the quality of life for Saskatchewan families, and this government continues to make life more affordable.

I was back in my constituency on the weekend, Mr. Speaker. I was in Moosomin. I was on Ochapowace First Nation on Saturday. I was in Indian Head, and I heard from so many people about how much that they appreciate the move to cut the carbon tax on everything for everyone. And that change is going to make life more affordable for every single person, for every single family in Saskatchewan. And once again, Mr. Speaker, this government listened and this government delivered.

I had a lot of reaction from people in my riding when our government announced that Saskatchewan would mark carbon tax freedom day on April 1st. People were showing me their utility bills, showing just how much of a bite carbon tax was taking out of their personal or small-business budgets.

[11:30]

One small-business owner in my community shared his natural gas bill from January: \$1,203 for natural gas; \$60 of GST [goods and services tax] on the natural gas; \$1,475 of carbon tax; and \$74 of GST on the carbon tax. So \$1,200 worth of natural gas and \$1,600 worth of tax on that \$1,200. And one business in my riding shared with me how much they had been submitting in carbon tax on fuel sales, and it was hard to believe, Mr. Speaker. In a typical month this one business was submitting \$400,000 in carbon tax, money that was taken directly out of our Saskatchewan economy. Eliminating the carbon tax on everything for everyone will make a difference for affordability for every single person in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, our government has always opposed the carbon tax. The opposition has not. In 2016 the Leader of the Opposition voted against a motion that opposed the federal government's plan to impose a national carbon tax.

The member for Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood thinks that the carbon tax, which drove up the cost of everything, was saving people money. He said in a Facebook post in 2022, and I quote, "The carbon tax is revenue neutral. It's given back to you. And then you can choose something else to spend it on like an electric car which saves you even more money." So perhaps he bought a cybertruck with his carbon tax refund.

And in addition to the decision to remove the carbon tax on everything for everyone, our government introduced a budget that includes affordability measures that will help the budget of every single person in this province. Once again, Mr. Speaker, our government listened and our government delivered.

Mr. Speaker, you simply need to look at the numbers to see how Saskatchewan compares with other jurisdictions around the country to see that we are succeeding in keeping Saskatchewan an affordable place to live. The increased personal exemptions will mean an additional 54,000 residents of our province — 54,000 — will no longer be paying provincial income tax.

And, Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard to ensure Saskatchewan remains the most affordable place to live in Canada. Affordability is crucial because it directly impacts the quality of life for residents. When living costs are manageable, families can thrive. Mr. Speaker, *The Saskatchewan Affordability Act* introduced 13 commitments because our government listens, and our government is following through on those commitments in the 2025-26 budget because our government delivers.

On affordability for families, this government has listened and this government has delivered. In this year's budget, affordability for families includes doubling the active families benefit, making it more affordable for families to pay for sports, arts, cultural, and recreational activities. Our government is adding, as I've mentioned, \$500 a year for four years to the basic exemption, spousal, equivalent to spouse; senior supplement; and dependent child tax credits, which will save Saskatchewan residents \$45 million in 2025.

The fertility treatment tax credit provides a one-time refundable tax credit up to \$10,000 for fertility treatment and related drug costs for families pursuing parenthood. And, Mr. Speaker, I've heard from many people in my riding just how important this is, how life-changing this can be for some couples who simply want

to have a family.

Autism spectrum disorder individualized funding provides parents with funding to purchase services that best suit their child's needs. It provides \$8,000 a year for children under six and 6,000 a year for children 6 to 11. And, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say our government has increased autism individualized funding by \$4 million in the current budget.

And I could go on, Mr. Speaker. This government has acted, you know, in the interests of Saskatchewan people and has made so many, so many changes that have impacted affordability. And we can take some of these affordability measures, Mr. Speaker, because of the strong Saskatchewan economy. And that, Mr. Speaker, is thanks to the resourcefulness, the resilience, and the drive of Saskatchewan people.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to second the motion made from the member from Weyburn:

That this Assembly support the Government of Saskatchewan for its record of consistent and meaningful affordability measures.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Jordan McPhail: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great honour to rise for my first 75-minute debate here. And what an awesome opportunity to talk about affordability. I do find it slightly ironic that the member that moved the motion is the same member that shut down a committee where I was bringing an investigation into food prices in northern Saskatchewan just this last session.

Now there's many things, there's many things in northern Saskatchewan that make life less affordable than the rest of Saskatchewan. I've been trying to highlight that to this government since being elected back in October. You know, the member that just spoke before me, the member from Moosomin-Montmartre, talked about a utility bill.

Between fall and spring session, the member from Athabasca and I, we went up into northern Saskatchewan. And I'll also add that the Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs, when I asked him what community in the northern administrative district did he go to prior to budget to see what he might be able to do for the people of the North, his answer was, "I haven't yet gone to a northern community."

So when looking at the affordability measures, again the utility bill. When we look at the utility bills of people from Stony Rapids, Black Lake, \$1,200. Not a year — a month, Mr. Speaker. Not \$100 a month. This is the utility bills that they're paying just in power to heat their homes, cook their family suppers.

This government has raised power rates to the point that folks in northern Saskatchewan are questioning whether they pay their power bill or feed their family. Those are not affordability measures when you raise the power rates so you have to make those decisions.

On food security, I think it would be almost fair to say that from the time that the government put the budget forward with the \$12 million surplus, and then subtracted 432 really quick, my honest thoughts . . . I called my wife. I said, I wonder if they bought some turkeys from Wollaston Lake, Saskatchewan. \$168 turkeys — that's what I got to see in the campaign. Those are the prices that the people of the North are paying.

When we talked in this House about the carbon tax, and once it was removed here in Saskatchewan, we saw gas prices drop. The members opposite applaud that. It's a great thing when gas prices are cheaper. Too bad there wasn't another way that they could have provided that relief to everyone in Saskatchewan in the fall session. But if the members opposite remember, there was an opportunity. We had a rule 61 here to bring affordability measures that would have taken place that day, Mr. Speaker.

They did not want to provide the affordability relief, yet they applaud when gas prices go down. Imagine if you could save 15 cents a litre, Mr. Speaker. Again they put politics over the people of Saskatchewan when they refused to support the gas tax suspension put forward by the 27 people on this side of the House.

I also think of the good people that have to travel the roads in northern Saskatchewan. Some of the worst roads in Saskatchewan, I might add. The cost of maintenance for those vehicles, astronomically higher. Why? You're totalling out your suspension, hitting boulders, potholes as deep as halfway up my calf, Mr. Speaker. It is a big hole. That is a big hole in the road, Mr. Speaker. Almost as big a hole as the hole that they blew into the budget with a \$432 . . .

These are the things that northerners are facing. The high gas prices: \$3.50 a litre in Fond-du-Lac. That's what they pay to go and hunt and fish, Mr. Speaker, not to just go out and parade around the town. They use it to provide sustenance to their table. They could have offered affordability measures to the North long ago if all they would do is put politics aside, look at the real solutions that any member of this House can put forward, which we did and they did not support.

You know, the member from Moosomin-Montmartre wants to talk about a family of four. Well I am a family of four — me, my wife, I have two beautiful daughters that I'm hopefully going to be able to make it all the way home tonight, Mr. Speaker, and able to see them. I miss them. I missed them last weekend; got storm stayed here. But tonight Dad's coming home.

You know what else was brought home for the family, for my family here in Saskatchewan? PST on the clothes that I put on my daughters. As anyone would know that raises children, they grow fast, Mr. Speaker. Especially, as my mom would say, bad weeds grow faster. And so for me I had to get a lot of clothes really quickly growing up.

My girls have been growing, and every single time I need to put them in new clothes, every time that I go to The Children's Place, babyGap, all of those different stores, I have to pay PST on every single piece of article of clothing that I have to put onto my daughters. And that's not something that any member on this side of the House put onto my family of four. It's the members opposite. In fact, it was myself and the 26 members on this side

of the House that put a motion forward to cut the PST on children's clothes.

Groceries. Rotisserie chickens, a staple for a busy household. I'm sure that there's many members on the other side that have taken a rotisserie chicken home. And the member from Mount Royal might have had to take two home one day. So the rotisserie chicken that we provide onto our tables, that was an added tax to my family of four by the members opposite. Something that the members on this side of the House said was not acceptable and tried to remove — not supported by the members opposite.

I think of all the things that we do here, Mr. Speaker, to stand up for all the families across Saskatchewan. I look at housing. There's families in northern Saskatchewan that are already paying astronomically higher prices on gas, on food security, on their maintenance bills, on their broken highways, or on their vehicles from the broken highways in northern Saskatchewan.

And not only that. Now when they go to renovate their homes, they're added a 6 per cent PST on the construction labour to their homes if they want to make it more energy efficient, a tax that was not put on them by any member on this side of the House. That was a tax added to them by the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to child care, again I have two growing girls at home. Those two girls, I have to put food in their bellies, get them off to school, clothe them, and yes, when dad and mom have to go to work to provide that resource to the house, we need to put them in child care. And the affordability measure for that is a \$10-a-day child care, something that this government refuses to sign the contract like 11 other jurisdictions have already done, Mr. Speaker.

So the question that I have always wondered since hearing the news that we have yet to sign on to the child care deal is, will my family of four be stuck with a bill of additional child care because the government might be willing to put politics over families here in Saskatchewan?

You know, Mr. Speaker, when I think of the good people of the North — they've reached out to myself, to the member from Athabasca — one of the costs that always comes to my mind is that food security. Twenty-seven people diagnosed with scurvy in La Ronge. They didn't need a tax break to put a hot tub in their backyard. They didn't need a tax break to reshingle their roof. What they needed was relief from a \$500-a-week grocery bill. This government could not provide that.

The cost goes astronomically higher because of the cost of transportation, Mr. Speaker. That's why we put our ideas forward to remove the PST on groceries, to cut or suspend the gas tax to provide them that instant relief which they could not support. And so when they tell me that they are talking about affordability, it's a joke to me, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

[11:45]

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

Barret Kropf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be on

my feet this afternoon and I'm excited that this government gives us rookies a chance to be part of the 75-minute debate while the opposition appears to have benched some of their rookies. Oh well. Let's get after it, Mr. Speaker.

We have an affordability budget . . .

Speaker Goudy: — I'd ask the member to keep his comments . . . It's unfair for you to talk about the members opposite in that way. Please move forward.

Barret Kropf: — My apologies. My apologies, Mr. Speaker. We have an affordability budget that delivers for everybody. I've gone out and talked to many people in Dakota-Arm River about the \$2 billion in affordability measures, measures in our budget, and I want to read into *Hansard* some of their comments.

As you know, we have the highest provincial income tax threshold in the nation at 63,200 allowing another 54,000 people in this province to be lifted from the tax roll. Under the stifling financial shackles of the NDP, families began paying provincial income tax at just \$26,150. Under our affordability plan, you will no longer pay provincial tax until our new threshold of 63,200. That means we're leaving more money in your pockets to decide your spending and give you peace of mind.

A quote from one of the mothers, a family of four, said this:

When you're in the midst of growing and raising a family, there's already so much on your mind, things you have to think about or worry about. Living in an affordable province like Saskatchewan gives you more breathing room, not just for your budget but mentally too. Your time and energy are constantly being drained by figuring out how to make ends meet.

Our budget gives that family peace of mind, Mr. Speaker.

Our school playground equipment grant is \$3.75 million per year for communities to access funds for safe playground spaces. I've heard many stories across communities in my riding, Mr. Speaker, of stressed out community leaders who have had trouble and difficulty raising money for their new playground equipment. This affordability measure is removing that stress from those community leaders from having to raise such significant funds.

Again our budget is making life more affordable. One grandfather pulled me aside and said this:

As a grandfather, I'm so happy that the government created this new school playground equipment fund. I can picture my grandkids running around, laughing, playing, and making memories. This has given them something that will last, something that help make their childhood special and gets them outside and active.

In this budget, Mr. Speaker, is also a rink affordability grant. It was increased 100 per cent. It will now give \$5,000 to 577 ice surfaces this coming year. That's almost \$3 million going to communities across Saskatchewan to make their arena operations more affordable and sustainable for the long term.

One local volunteer who is the backbone of his community texted me this morning and said:

These small-town rinks already pay so much to keep our ice in and our lights on. The grant money helps us so much. To tack thousands more through the carbon tax is crippling, especially for a rink like ours that doesn't have a steady stream of revenue from minor hockey. We don't need it harder than it already is in keeping our lights on.

Mr. Speaker, our removal of the carbon tax and our commitment to the rink affordability grant is exactly the combination that all our communities need.

As you know, April 1st we heralded it as a carbon tax-free day here in Saskatchewan. Removing the Liberal-NDP carbon tax from everything in Saskatchewan moving forward is a game changer. A local mayor in my community reached out to me last night, saying:

This makes a difference. It will help us keep our taxes from going up. With all the carbon tax included in our fuel costs, we are looking at over \$50,000 in savings for our town. That would be 2 per cent of our income tax which can now go to infrastructure repairs.

It's not just in one area, Mr. Speaker, that that carbon tax removal impacts. As the first province in Canada to remove it, we had one school division reach out and inform me that they paid \$363,000 in carbon tax the last 12 months — 363,000. When you multiply that across the 27 school divisions in our province, that's almost \$10 million that's going to be staying here in Saskatchewan, stay in our communities to enable our school operations teams to maintain their facilities with excellence. The head of that school division operations team told me, "This is such a huge relief. It will have a substantial impact on our facilities' operating budget."

Think of the carbon tax savings across the province in our schools, in our community centres, hospitals, care homes, correction facilities, on farming operations, your fuel costs, on water treatment plants, manufacturing facilities, mining operations, on your house and mine. Everywhere you look, Mr. Speaker, it will be like an Oprah Winfrey show: you get more money in your pocket, you get more money in your pocket, and so do you get more money in your pocket.

More affordability, Mr. Speaker, is what our government is all about. Over the course of the municipal revenue-sharing program, we will now put \$362 million back into every community in our province.

A small-town mayor communicated to me saying:

The municipal revenue-sharing increases have been incredibly beneficial. Oftentimes aging infrastructure is stretched beyond its limits because the costs of upgrades are significant. With the extra MRS money, it doesn't force our hand to cut another necessary function out of our community in order to supply another.

The last affordability measure that I want to talk about, Mr. Speaker, is the 1 per cent tax rate on small business, a game

changer for the small businesses in our province. A new thriving business in our riding that was started by some local farmers and some new Canadians shared with me last night:

This tax initiative empowers small businesses like ours to reinvest in our operations, fostering growth and promoting staff retention. By doing so we can maintain low and affordable prices benefiting small communities like ours, including elderly residents and young families alike.

Mr. Speaker, when small businesses are thriving they make sure their communities and the citizens in those communities are also thriving, and in this case making sure that savings from their business tax is passed along to citizens in their community. That's how we do it in Saskatchewan.

Another small-town business leader talked about the impacts of the budget on his company and community said:

I love Outlook. I love Saskatchewan and I am super-grateful that we have a fiscally responsible government that's been able to keep our costs of living within reason. I've been able to expand my business, provide wage increases, and make significant contributions to a number of communities' capital campaigns during a time when a lot of other provinces have their economies in distress.

You see, Mr. Speaker, affordability measures for everyone matters. When we create business tax reductions, it allows local businesses to give back into their communities and assure that life is more affordable for everyone.

When we became the only province in the nation to remove the carbon tax, we put more money back into the pockets of Saskatchewan residences and businesses alike. And right now when we get our quarterly allowance from the NDP-Liberal overlords, we pay less at the pumps, we pay less on our monthly heating, less on our monthly power bills, less on our education taxes. But it allows more businesses to retain more profit to reinvest into the communities, their staff, and their facilities. Keeping the business tax rate at 1 per cent saves Saskatchewan small businesses more than \$50 million annually.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to be clear in terms of just what it really means even to my family close to home. Last weekend at my son's birthday party, we were celebrating and my granddaughter was swinging around on the furniture. And I kind of joked and said, Hazy, we should put you in ninja classes, because as a two-year-old she was flying all over the furniture. And her mom said, we're looking at getting her into gymnastics. And I said, that's great, because we can get you a \$300 cheque, a tax credit for her activities in this coming year.

And at the same time we were talking about her husband, my son Josh, and what his next steps were going to be in terms of his education. And when he found out about the grad retention rate and if he went to school, graduated, and stayed here in the province to continue working, that was going to be a tipping point for them to stay here and raise their family in a thriving, affordable economy.

Mr. Speaker, the 2025-26 Saskatchewan government budget is a budget filled with \$2 billion in affordability measures, making a

significant difference for everyone everywhere. My mother-in-law called me actually, or texted me this morning, and she also pointed out, "Thanks for letting me know about the blood glucose monitors. We are now going to apply for that for Keith and I, to make sure that we're monitoring our health properly." So she said a huge thank you for that as well.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it's with those points in mind that I will be supporting the motion made by the member from Weyburn-Bengough on affordability measures here in Saskatchewan.

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

Brittney Senger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well what a pleasure it is to not be benched as a rookie MLA and the youngest MLA in this Legislative Assembly and participate in this 75-minute debate.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is just a bunch of misinformation and misinformed numbers. It's affecting real people's lives. Let me be crystal clear. This budget is another example of a way that the government is failing to prioritize the people of Saskatchewan. Let's not forget Saskatchewan leads the country in the highest rate of economic anxiety. We're number one at one of the most unsettling stats in Canada.

And what's this government doing about it? Nothing. Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in this government's budget to support workers that are concerned about their jobs. There is nothing to help small businesses and no support package for farmers facing Chinese tariffs. People across the province are worried about their paycheque, their farm, and their business, yet this government's affordability measures leave everyone behind.

This Sask Party government seems to think that cutting the industrial carbon tax, something that we support, is going to fix the issues facing the province. Well it's just not enough. The Sask Party had months to prepare for Donald Trump's tariffs, but instead they sat on their hands. Donald Trump is taking steps to destroy our economy. We are on a roller coaster and the world is waiting to see what happens next. And the people right here at home are anxious, waiting about their future, filled with uncertainty because this government has no plan.

If the government were serious about actually supporting the province, they would have included something beyond a one-pager in their budget on tariffs. But what can you expect from a government that has the slowest and weakest response in all of Canada when they should be prioritizing the province? Even Danielle Smith included a contingency plan in her budget on tariffs. They are still missing the mark. Mr. Speaker, this government is once again out of touch with the needs of people of Saskatchewan.

Rather than investing in the economy, this government has been outsourcing our jobs to the United States. There is nothing more Saskatchewan than fishing and camping in our beautiful province. Our provincial parks are something that we take pride in, something that makes Saskatchewan unique, and something that we all flock to every single summer. Yet when you pick up the phone to book a Saskatchewan campsite or buy a fishing licence, you'll be greeted by someone in New York, Donald

Trump's own hometown. We should be putting Saskatchewan and Canadian workers first, but instead the Sask Party is giving jobs away to American companies.

This government has been bragging about how they're taking action to ensure the province remains the most affordable place to live in Canada. But for who? It's certainly not the most affordable place for people struggling to make ends meet. The government is boasting about a 2 per cent increase to SIS and SAID, programs that are supposed to support the needs of the most vulnerable. But between 2015 and 2023, there was a zero per cent increase to SAID despite drastic increases to rent and the cost of living. The 2 per cent increase that people are receiving now works out to less than \$25 a month.

[12:00]

That's not even close to the increased cost of living and doesn't scratch the surface of the needs of people of Saskatchewan. People are struggling to make ends meet as it is, yet they are not a priority to this government, and it shows in their budget. Mr. Speaker, the minuscule increases to social programs — social programs that are supposed to protect people — are leaving people behind, and the lack of a contingency plan is going to hurt everyone.

And what about community-based organizations that are filling the void that the government cannot by providing services to people? Well I've talked to them, and they're just barely holding it together but are still stepping it up where the government has dropped the ball. And what I keep hearing: there's a need for more funding, there's a need for multi-year funding, and this government's 3 per cent boost is not going to fix all of their problems.

These organizations are stuck in a cycle of short-term, one-year contracts. There is constant turnover because salaries are uncompetitive and short-term contracts mean that staff can't stick around. Let's not forget that they have to resubmit proposals every year, taking time out of the day where they could be doing important and valuable work. If this government were serious about delivering affordability measures for low-income individuals, they'd actually fund the necessary programs, but of course they are not.

Mr. Speaker, it's more than just the most vulnerable in our province that this budget is failing. It's hurting women and parents too. This government's plan to invest in fertility treatment is far from sufficient. Women and families are spending tens of thousands of dollars just to seek fertility treatment if they're lucky enough to have the funds up front to pay for it. So no, a tax rebate is not a substitution for real access to care. And the Sask Party still hasn't signed on to the \$10-a-day child care deal. Women are still forced to leave the province just to get breast cancer screening. But this is what you get when you have a government that's made up of mostly men.

Mr. Speaker, the math just doesn't math on this one. The government didn't plan a contingency for Trump's tariffs, and now we're faced with a \$432 million hole in our budget. Mr. Speaker, this government has no plan for the trade war, no plan to create jobs, and is already putting our province in the red. What we need is bold, forward-looking economic strategies, a

government that actually delivers on affordability and keeps jobs in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is not delivering for you. Even though that's their slogan, who is it really delivering for? Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — So the 65-minute period has expired. The 10-minute question-and-answer period will begin. I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Jordan McPhail: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a really easy question for the member from Weyburn-Bengough. What is 12 minus 432?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Weyburn-Bengough.

Michael Weger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the member from Cumberland for the question. We're very happy to have been able to make April 1st carbon tax-free day. By reducing the carbon tax on everything for everyone in the province of Saskatchewan, we're putting more money in every person's pocket in this province, so they can decide what they want to do with their money.

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

Blaine McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now the members opposite criticize our budget every year for this not having any affordability measures — no affordability measures — but that simply is not the case. Our motion outlines just some of the affordability measures that will keep money in the pockets of families and ensure that our province remains one of the most affordable in the nation.

Now to the member from Regina Mount Royal: will you stand and acknowledge today that the over-2 billion in affordability measures embedded in our budget saved families thousands of dollars every year and that those affordability measures offered more for working families compared to your party's affordability platform?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Mount Royal.

Trent Wotherspoon: — Thanks for the question. The motion that was brought here today by that Sask Party government, so out of touch, actually says that it had consistent and meaningful affordability measures. We know the reality: \$2 billion more in PST on everything from children's clothes to groceries to restaurants to recreation — \$2 billion more. More than \$1,000 for each and every household, far surpassing any sort of bits of offerings in this budget. This is a tax-and-squander government that time and time again has stuck Saskatchewan people, who are working so damned hard, with the cost of their mismanagement.

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

Brittney Senger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the member from Dakota-Arm River agree that we should tariff-proof our economy with trade-enabling infrastructure, or does he think we

should just continue hoping for the best?

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

Barret Kropf: — Mr. Speaker, aside from us putting forward a balanced budget, our government has enhanced policies that foster economic growth while maintaining strong financial management. Our province has the second-lowest net-to-GDP among all the provinces in Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Batoche.

Darlene Rowden: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite suggest our budget does nothing for the people of Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Speaker, let's educate that still-out-of-touch side on what Saskatchewan people think of this budget and our affordability measures. The CEO of the Saskatchewan Realtors Association said, "Saskatchewan is the most affordable province in the country." That's only one of the many great things our partners had to say about this budget and our province, Mr. Speaker.

To the member from Saskatoon Southeast: do you agree that Saskatchewan is one of the most affordable places to live and raise a family in Canada?

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

Brittney Senger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for the question. I have to wonder, who is this budget actually affordable for? Because it is certainly not delivering for women, for families, for people with disabilities, and for people that are low income. Frankly, no, it does not do anything for the people of Saskatchewan.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Jordan McPhail: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And just a few comments ago from the members opposite, they wanted to talk about the carbon tax. And for me, I'm glad that they found their feet to talk about it. Because we've been clear on this side; we don't support the carbon tax. If the members opposite would only ask the member from Cypress Hills on their side, they don't even have to cross the floor to see what we think on this side of the House.

My question to the member from Moosomin-Montmartre: which number is larger — 8.022 billion or 8.004 billion?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Moosomin-Montmartre.

Kevin Weedmark: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the member opposite for the question. You know, the best thing that we can do at this point in our province is to make sure that we're prepared for anything that may come. And that comes from being in a position of fiscal responsibility, of fiscal strength. That's why there's so many affordability measures in this budget to prepare the people of Saskatchewan for what might come, and that's why we've created a budget, Mr. Speaker, that is fiscally responsible.

If we were not in a position of strength, we could be in a situation like British Columbia under the NDP. Just yesterday, just yesterday two credit bureaus — Moody's and S&P Global — both slapped NDP-governed British Columbia with credit rating downgrades. Just yesterday. Moody's cited a weakening in governance and entrenched deficits as reasons for its downgrade. S&P Global warns that British Columbia's commitment to fiscal discipline . . .

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . That was the answer, and now it's the question. I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Chris Beaudry: — Since 2007 our government has introduced a multitude of programs to make life more affordable for every citizen of this province. Saskatchewan has one of the highest tax-free thresholds in Canada. A family of four pays no income tax on their first \$63,200 of income. Under the NDP, a family of four started paying provincial income tax at \$26,150. But the NDP didn't mention personal income tax deductions at all in their election platform, only proposing a temporary fuel tax suspension.

To the member from Cumberland: which tax threshold makes Saskatchewan more affordable? And why do you oppose income tax reductions for Saskatchewan families?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Jordan McPhail: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. What I oppose is this government trying to convince people of Saskatchewan that this budget is balanced when they blew a \$432 million hole in the budget, Mr. Speaker. The real question he should be asking is, the Minister of Finance, what is he going to cut to be able to pay for his \$432 million hole that he blew in the budget?

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

Brittney Senger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To follow up on my colleague's comment, what does the member from Dakota-Arm River think we need to cut from the budget first, now that we've eliminated half a billion dollars in revenue?

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

Barret Kropf: — As my daughter-in-law cited when they talked to me this last weekend about the affordability in our province, we have not cut anything. In fact we continue to offer more for young families like her and her growing family, including the active family benefit — the refundable increasing to \$300 per child or \$400 with a child with disability — and it's doubling the income threshold to receive the active family benefit from 60,000 to 120,000 so that that young family and all the other young families in our province can continue to thrive in our province, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Kindersley-Biggar.

Kim Gartner: — Mr. Speaker, this budget has nearly

\$2.4 billion in affordability measures for residents — reductions in income tax, increases in SAID and SIS benefits, even a refundable tax credit of 50 per cent towards fertility treatments, something your members didn't support.

These are all items that just wouldn't happen under an NDP government. To the member from Regina Mount Royal . . .

Speaker Goudy: — The 75-minute debate has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

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

Motion No. 1 — Prioritizing Local Businesses in Government Procurement

Erika Ritchie: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's such an honour to be on my feet this morning and speaking to this priority motion on the heels of such a lively debate here in the Assembly.

[12:15]

As the opposition shadow minister for SaskBuilds, I'm speaking to the Assembly today about government procurement and the need for government to support local jobs and local businesses. At the end of my comments, I'll be moving the following motion:

That the Assembly calls upon the government to implement a procurement policy that prioritizes local workers and local businesses in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this is a really important motion that I hope all members will get behind. I know that every member on our side thinks this is a priority, and I think it's pretty clear from the Sask Party's choices over these last few years that local procurement has not been a priority for them.

We see that time and time again. We see contracts going stateside for things like tire recycling, park registrations, hunting and angling licences, medical laboratories. See the list goes on and on.

On our side, we've been consistent for years that Saskatchewan workers and companies should be prioritized by this government. We've called for a hire Saskatchewan procurement plan that would see local workers and companies benefit to create more jobs here.

And frankly, Mr. Speaker, there is an incredible, incredible opportunity before us in the face of, you know, staring down the threats from Donald Trump and his government that has just recently yesterday announced sweeping tariffs affecting world markets, countries all over the world. But I would say to you, Mr. Speaker, that right now this is an opportunity for us to get serious — serious about supporting local Saskatchewan business and workers here in Saskatchewan.

You know, on this side of the House, we've been doing wide and deep consultation with businesses, with industry associations of all stripes, and what I've been really excited to hear is the opportunities that exist right now in supplier diversity. Now I

know that there are some of our Crowns who have started to step up to the plate and really embrace this opportunity. But you know what? We need to be doing so much more.

There's incredible opportunity in supporting women-based businesses, that right now the global spend is only 1 per cent. Only 1 per cent of the global spend is to companies that are owned by and have women CEOs. You know, some of the barriers that are talked about is that, you know, people don't like change and then it's the challenges around growing and scaling. And I think here with the wage charter and the supplier diversity program that organizations like Women Entrepreneurs Saskatchewan is promoting is an incredible opportunity for us to show leadership in diversity, equity, and inclusion when it comes to procurement, not only just for women but also for businesses that are Indigenously owned.

I had the incredible opportunity a couple weeks ago to attend the SREDA [Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority] summit in Saskatoon and hear from leading businesses, Indigenously owned, such as the Peter Ballantyne Group of Companies, headed up by Gary Merasty. And you know, they're doing incredible work seeking out opportunities to grow and take over companies that are at sort of . . . People are looking to divest at retirement and things like that. And I think that is a form of economic reconciliation. And when we can prioritize these kinds of businesses that are Indigenously owned, that are run by women entrepreneurs, that's good for Saskatchewan.

It's good for our economic growth. It's good for our workers. It's good to be supporting the innovation that they're bringing into the markets rather than going stateside on contracts with procurement policies that are outdated and are not meeting the moment that we find ourselves in here today.

Now when this controversy and threat of tariffs emerged, back in February we had the first announcements, uncertainty from Donald Trump. We kicked off our website shopsk.ca. And this is a place . . .

[Applause]

Erika Ritchie: — Yeah. Thank you very much.

This is a website where people can go and they can list their favourite local business.

In Saskatoon we have amazing entrepreneurs and small businesses right across the constituency. We've got them on Broadway Avenue. We have them on Lorne Avenue. We have them in the Exhibition area and on 8th Street, Clarence Avenue. Incredible businesses doing incredible work. And it's such an immense joy and pleasure for me to be able to visit these businesses, support them locally, find out their stories about, you know, why they started the businesses and what services they are providing.

I want to highlight one specific example. A couple weeks ago, we went to a local business on Lorne Avenue called The Cottage marketplace. And I've got to tell you, if you haven't been there, next time you're in Saskatoon, check it out. This is a business that provides an opportunity for local vendors to be able to sell

their wares in a really cool local business atmosphere. They sell things like gift items. They sell food items, or recycled up items where they take, you know, discarded clothing and turn it into new, funky garments. I mean the place is just full of like humorous gifts and just a whole range of different things.

And it's just a really good example of the type of, you know, entrepreneurs that we have here in Saskatchewan that are promoting our local businesses. And I know, certainly on this side of the House, we've been doing everything we can to ensure that we're shopping local, supporting those local vendors, those businesses in our home communities.

And I encourage all members to check out the website shopsk.ca and support the hundreds of local businesses that are there from all across the province. Because when you support local businesses, you support local economies, and that's what this motion is all about.

I want to go over a few examples now of where this Sask Party government has failed to support local businesses. Earlier this week we canvassed the issue of the Sask Party government's 2012 decision to partner with a Texas-based company to run the provincial parks reservation system and sell our hunting and fishing licences in Saskatchewan. But you know, it blows my mind that the Sask Party decided to hand the contract for service to an American company and send all those jobs and dollars south of the border.

Now when this first happened, Mr. Speaker, in 2012, we were absolutely vocal in our disagreement with this decision to go with this contract. It made no sense then and it makes no sense now with Donald Trump threatening our own economic sovereignty. We canvassed this issue in question period, and I think my friend from Regina Walsh Acres put it best when he said this, and I quote:

If this Sask Party government thinks that giving a contract for a fishing licence to a US company makes sense in the face of . . . Trump's tariffs, then they've been taken in hook, line, and sinker.

When we called the phone line for fishing licences, the person on the other end of the line was in New York. You know, that's just not acceptable when Donald Trump is taking steps to crush our economy.

And I just want to say, I mean, people are furious. The responses that we've been getting back since we've made these questions most recently in the Assembly have been overwhelming. Just in terms of people understand. Like why would we be continuing to engage in a contract on something as, you know, close to the identity of Saskatchewan people like hunting and fishing and campground registrations when, you know, there are better alternatives?

Now I heard the members opposite say, well we just can't, you know, tear up the contract and the disarray that would cause. But I would say, you know, there are alternatives. There are companies here both in Saskatchewan that can provide and develop these kinds of software solutions, provide the service to us. There's also existing Canadian companies.

You know, I did a little bit of a quick online search and learned that there is a Canadian-based company called Camis out of Ontario that provides the park registration system for Ontario, BC, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Yukon, Newfoundland, and Manitoba. And even most recently Manitoba has cancelled their park registrations for the year and are providing that option.

So you know, I think the government had months and months to prepare for this eventuality. They should have been looking at solutions. I found it absolutely galling and incredible that when we brought that question to the Minister for Parks, recreation and sport, she was madly flipping through her binder and seemed to have no clue whatsoever about what we were even asking about. This from the member from Prince Albert Northcote, the Gateway to the North and our wonderful lake country here in Saskatchewan.

And I just find it incredible that she wasn't able to get on her feet and answer that very basic, simple question when we asked it back on Monday. Certainly by Tuesday, you know, she seemed to be a little bit better prepared, but the issue still stands.

We have procurement policies here. We have been told that the government side is reviewing those procurement policies. I expect every minister to have some sort of working familiarity with the contracts that are going to stateside vendors. And you know, it's simply not acceptable that a minister would not come prepared to answer such a basic question.

We've also been very critical of this Sask Party government's decision to sign a contract with a private, out-of-province Sask Party donor to provide mammogram care. And this one really makes no sense, Mr. Speaker. Women in Saskatchewan should be able to get the care they need when they need it, close to home without paying out of pocket.

And you know, this really touches close to home for me. Someone who's very near and dear to me recently received a cancer diagnosis, something that should have been detected much sooner. But because of the long wait times, you know, it had a chance to grow and then meant that she had to receive treatment for a cancerous tumour.

And I'm sure that all of us on both sides of the Assembly, you know, can speak to similar examples of people we know that have been adversely affected. And the question really is, why hasn't that investment been made here in Saskatchewan to ensure that women can get the breast care, cancer care that they need here in their home province rather than sending it out of province?

Perhaps no better example of a failure of the Sask Party to buy local would be the Regina bypass. They spent \$2 billion to build a ring road on the bald, flat prairie around Regina, and they couldn't find a Saskatchewan company to do it. They couldn't even find a Canadian company to do it. They had to go all the way to Paris, France to find a company that could build the Regina bypass. We're paying millions of dollars every year to a French company for this bypass, and we're going to be paying for the years to come.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know, we have the best engineering firms here in Saskatchewan, firms like Associated Engineering,

AECOM, Stantec, Clifton. We educate our engineers at our world-class institutions, the University of Regina and Saskatchewan, so that they can provide these kinds of infrastructure services for our needs here. And it defies imagination and belief that we had to go all the way across the Atlantic Ocean to a French company in order to . . . And it just makes the point. We need to be supporting local procurement, local businesses, local labour.

And I know my time is up now, and so with that I would just like to say, it's time for the Sask Party to get with the program and start prioritizing local companies. I'll move the motion:

That the Assembly calls upon the government to implement a procurement policy that prioritizes local workers and local businesses in Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[12:30]

Speaker Goudy: — Thank you. It has been moved by the member from Saskatoon Nutana:

That the Assembly calls upon the government to implement a procurement policy that prioritizes local workers and local businesses in Saskatchewan.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise this afternoon and enter into the debate on the motion that was moved by my colleague the member for Saskatoon Nutana, who presented a really strong case, I might add, on the importance of the motion and the importance of prioritizing local workers and local businesses in Saskatchewan and this government's abject failure in both of those regards over the past 18 years, Mr. Speaker.

She pointed to many examples of contracts going out of province and contracts going out of country, both recent and historic. And it's something that we have certainly heard about in the eight-plus years I have been serving as an MLA. And I know that members more senior to me have been hearing about it even longer. It's a concern of many people in this province, seeing so many important contracts going both out of province and out of country.

At a time like this, Mr. Speaker, when, well frankly, our sovereignty is threatened by what were at one time very good allies of ours, this government should be doing more to ensure that they are both protecting Saskatchewan's economy but also protecting Saskatchewan's workers and businesses, and highlighting them in a way that they have clearly failed to do over the last many years, Mr. Speaker.

At this point I know I have others who are looking forward to entering in debate on this at later days, and so at this point I am prepared now to move to adjourn debate on this motion.

Speaker Goudy: — The member has moved to adjourn 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.

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

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that this House do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — This Assembly stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:33.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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