



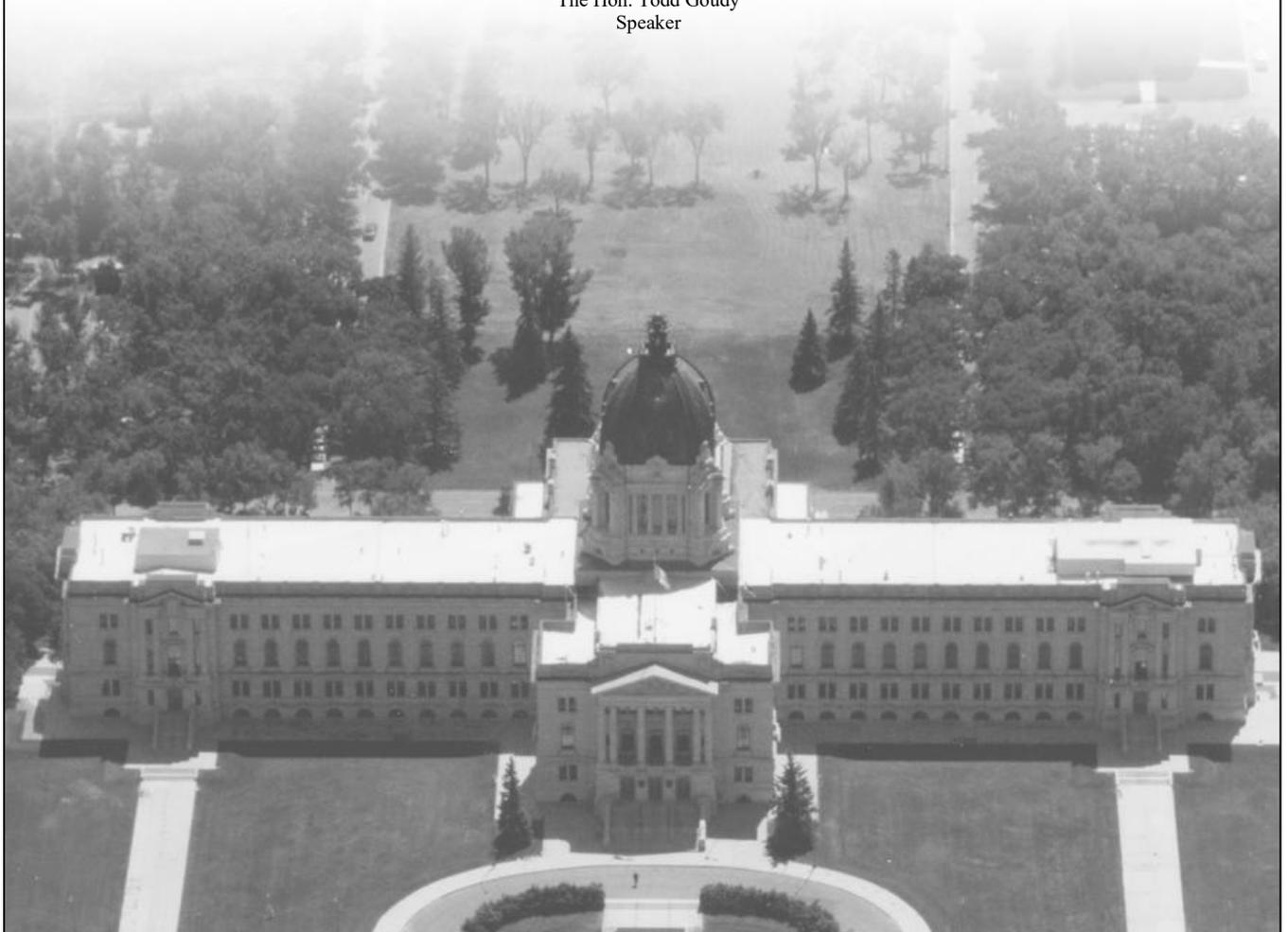
SECOND SESSION — THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

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



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
2nd Session — 30th Legislature

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

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

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Kropf , Barret — Dakota-Arm River (SP)	Young , Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)
Laliberte , Leroy — Athabasca (NDP)	

Standings

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

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

Speaker Goudy: — Please be seated. So before routine proceedings, I'd like to make a statement.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Question of Privilege

Speaker Goudy: — This morning at 10:22 a.m. I received a letter from the Deputy Opposition House Leader in which she raised a question of privilege in accordance with the provision of rule 12 of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*.

The Government House Leader has been informed of the details of the case and has provided me with a written response. In accordance with rule 12(4), it's my duty as Speaker to carefully examine the case in the context of the Assembly practices and precedents to determine whether a prima facie case of privilege has been established.

As I've not yet had sufficient time to do so, I shall defer my ruling until tomorrow. Thank you.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And to you and through you to all members of this Assembly, I would just like to take the opportunity to welcome everyone that has joined us here today. It is a great day to be in Saskatchewan. It's budget day in Saskatchewan.

And we are joined by so many different individuals and organizations, representatives of organizations that truly make this province and this nation a better place to live, whether it be individuals that are furthering and expanding and strengthening the economy in our province; whether it be individuals that are strengthening the health care delivery system that we have in Saskatchewan; or all of those that are working with different community organizations that are just truly making each and every community in our province and our nation a better place to live.

And so for that, Mr. Speaker, I say thank you to everyone that has joined us here today for what you do each and every day. I say thank you for joining us here today on budget day in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to please take a moment, welcome with appreciation everyone that has joined us in their Legislative Assembly today.

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

Carla Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take just a brief moment to join with the Premier and welcome all of the

guests who have joined us here in their Legislative Assembly.

I see leaders from right around the province here, Mr. Speaker. I see municipal leaders, First Nations leaders, business leaders, student leaders, labour leaders. All people who are not only interested but incredibly important to the future of this province, a province that has time and time again punched above its weight on the national, on the international stage, and whose superpower — even given all of the ways that this province has been blessed when it comes to natural resources and abundance in so many ways — our superpower has always been the people of this province and our ability to face good times and hard times together and to deliver good things for the people who live here.

Again, on behalf of the official opposition I'd like to join the Premier in welcoming all of the guests here today to this, your Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

April ChiefCalf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly calling on the government to implement rent control now.

The undersigned residents of Saskatchewan wish to bring the following to your attention: that Saskatchewan tenants are currently experiencing the highest level of rent increases in the country; that without rent control, landlords can implement unchecked rent hikes, making housing increasingly unaffordable and unstable; that with rent control, tenants can budget more effectively, potentially putting them in a position to pay for a down payment on their first home; that provinces such as British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island have already implemented rent control measures to protect tenants and maintain housing affordability.

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

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to adopt fair and effective rent control legislation that limits annual rent increases, ensures housing stability, and protects tenants from being priced out of their homes.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories to this petition reside in Martensville and Saskatoon. I do so present. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon University-Sutherland.

Tajinder Grewal: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition to address the affordability crisis in Saskatchewan.

The undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to your attention the following: that inflation is the highest it's been in more than three decades; that according to Angus Reid, 84 per cent of Saskatchewan people are feeling stressed about money, the highest such rates of financial

insecurity in Canada; that half of the Saskatchewan residents were living paycheque to paycheque before transportation and food costs skyrocketed in 2022; that the Sask Party government's power, PST [provincial sales tax], and tax hikes makes life more expensive; while other provinces acted, the Sask Party continues to ignore the opposition's call for gas tax relief.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will say the prayer that reads as follows:

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

The petition has been signed by residents of Prince Albert. I do so present.

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

Jared Clarke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling on the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to build a new hospital in Yorkton.

The undersigned residents wish to bring to our attention the following: that the existing hospital in Yorkton opened in 1962; it continues to deteriorate, and is no longer able sustain the growing care needs of the region; that the Saskatchewan Party government promised to replace the hospital 18 years ago but no formal work has been undertaken; that the emergency room experiences overcrowding, maternity patients don't have access to hot water, and the building systems are breaking down.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately build a new hospital for Yorkton.

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Your Care, Your Say Consultation

Meara Conway: — Thank you. Our flatlining health care system is at a crossroads, and everyone knows it, Mr. Speaker. This government's response to that crisis is a recycled patient-first plan, one that slaps a new cover on old ideas from 2009, 2012, 2015, repackaged with less accountability and — as the minister acknowledged himself — no consultation with front-line workers. A plan that offers little more than a delayed recognition of the value of nurse practitioners. So people are asking, why is this time different?

Mr. Speaker, imagine instead a Saskatchewan where patients and communities shape the care they receive, where we build a system worthy of the people who hold it up. That's what the NDP's [New Democratic Party] Your Care, Your Say

consultation is all about.

So what are we hearing? We're hearing this government has stopped listening. We're hearing we cannot continue down this path of waste and mismanagement. Half-billion-dollar IT [information technology] projects failed — AIMS [administrative information management system] for one — with zero accountability. Precious public dollars going out of province for basic breast care to Alberta at 10 times the cost.

We must focus on the realities of front-line providers, or we'll continue to lose them. And when care aides of 30 years say they now warn young people against going into health care altogether, we must listen to them, not dismiss or attack them, Mr. Speaker.

There is a better path. The solutions people are hungry for, they exist. In the months ahead, we will bring forth bold solutions to rebuild health care and restore hope. Because Saskatchewan has been leaders again, and we can do it again.

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

Blaine Lake Wins Kraft Hockeyville Provincial Competition

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize an outstanding achievement by the people of Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan, who were named the provincial winner for Saskatchewan in the 2026 Kraft Hockeyville competition. This recognition is a testament to the passion, pride, and determination of a community that truly understands the importance of a local rink, not only as a place to play hockey, but as the heart of a community.

As the provincial winner, the community surrounding Blaine Lake and Blaine Lake Skating Rink and the Blaine Lake Raiders will receive \$50,000 for arena upgrades and \$10,000 in youth hockey equipment. Blaine Lake is now one of 13 regional winners across Canada and is competing for the grand prize of \$250,000 and the opportunity to host an NHL [National Hockey League] pre-season game, with the top two finalists being announced on March 21st. So make sure you go online and vote.

This achievement is especially meaningful to me and my brother, as Blaine Lake is our hometown. I've seen first-hand the pride people take in their community and the countless volunteer hours that keep rinks running and community spirit strong. The Optimist Club and all the businesses in Blaine Lake and area deserve a special thank you.

I congratulate everyone involved and wish Blaine Lake every success as it continues to demonstrate the strength, spirit, and pride of rural Saskatchewan, a place I proudly call home. Thank you.

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

Grid and Growth Plan

Aleana Young: — Why thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And do I have a pitch for you. It's an exciting new plan. What if I told you that you'd have to pay 100 per cent more on your power bill

each and every month forever? No? Okay, what if I told you it would increase our reliance on the US [United States], doesn't grow our grid or our economy, and would ensure that Saskatchewan was the last province to reduce emissions?

I know, Mr. Speaker, it sounds like a dreadful plan. But it's the only one the Sask Party government has. Independent modelling done by Doug Ford's own economist shows that their plan — with no carbon tax, no clean electricity regs, and SaskPower's own numbers — will lead to the highest rates, kill jobs, and drive away investment.

But never fear, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan has another choice — the Saskatchewan NDP's grid and growth plan, where we build natural gas, renewables, and nuclear. Where we don't kill jobs or communities, and we work with our neighbours, our First Nations, and industry. Our plan, Mr. Speaker, is grounded in independent expert analysis and real consultation.

Families, farms, and small businesses, they deserve a government focused on affordability that ensures energy security and flexibility for the future. It's time, Mr. Speaker, to take the politics out of power. And let's get this right. The choice is clear — a desperate plan that doubles rates, or a plan that powers the future.

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

Regina Crime Stoppers Volunteers Support Their Community

Blaine McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding work of Regina Crime Stoppers — 40 years as a non-profit, volunteer-run organization supporting our community.

Here are the statistics since 1984: 27,700 tips resulting in 2,399 arrests; 4,321 cases cleared; and over 12 million in recovered property, cash, and illicit drugs. Regina Crime Stoppers has an extraordinary record of community-driven impact, and, Mr. Speaker, the program continues to grow.

In 2025 alone, 917 tips leading to 44 arrests; 56 charges; and nearly 28,500 in recovered property and illicit drugs. 2025 also saw 28 rewards given to citizens, totalling over \$18,000, a major increase in rewards claims, exemplifying the public's confidence in the program. Now none of this is possible without the passionate volunteers who govern the organization, raise the funds for rewards, and promote community awareness.

Mr. Speaker, Regina Crime Stoppers is rejuvenating a tradition, the Jail 'n' Bail fundraiser taking place at Cornwall Centre tomorrow. The fundraiser is driven by calling on your friends or family to hopefully bail you out. Once you have collected enough money, you are released. It's a fun, community-driven event that brings together local leaders, businesses, media, and police.

[13:45]

Please join me in recognizing Regina Crime Stoppers and the Regina Police Service for a job well done.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Silverspring.

Government Use of Special Warrants

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to share my concerns about this government's special warrant spending spree. This Sask Party government insisted they had balanced the books to the tune of a \$12 million surplus, then doubled down on this fallacy for the rest of the year while continuing unbudgeted spending in the range of \$1 billion.

\$650 million in special warrants were recently issued by the Sask Party government. This is a concerning breach of fiscal transparency and democratic accountability. Special warrants are supposed to be a rare mechanism for emergency spending when the legislature is not sitting. Instead their use has become but a troubling pattern instead of a rare exception.

This is the third consecutive year that the government has turned to this tool just weeks before presenting its budget. This pre-budget spending spree was done through bypassing legislative scrutiny, and it leaves Saskatchewan taxpayers in the dark about the true state of the province's finances.

What does this do to public trust? The government promised a \$12 million surplus last spring, but now faces a deficit, with these warrants driving the current fiscal year shortfall even higher. Saskatchewan residents deserve better than a government that relies on secretive manoeuvres that avoid transparency.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Carrot River Valley.

Patients-First Health Care Plan

Terri Bromm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is continuing to address the challenges in our health care system. Earlier this month our government was proud to unveil our Health minister's ambitious patients-first health care strategy. We've heard from residents that their two main concerns are access to a primary care provider and that surgeries need to be completed in a timely manner.

Some of the key actions our government is implementing to address these issues are, increasing the number and expanding the scope of practice for all health care professionals; expanding access to virtual care; increasing the number of and access to urgent care centres throughout the province; continuing to recruit, train, and increase the number of doctors, nurse practitioners, and nurses; expansion of diagnostic services like MRI [magnetic resonance imaging], CT [computerized tomography], and PET/CT [positron emission tomography/computerized tomography] scans.

Since 2018 we've invested more than 2.3 billion into improving Saskatchewan health care facilities and equipment, but there's still more to do. We're going to continue to listen to Saskatchewan residents, invest in our health care system, and address the challenges our nation is facing.

Mr. Speaker, our Premier said it best: patients are at the heart of every decision we make in health care. And with that, in this provincial budget our government is continuing to ensure that

Saskatchewan remains the best place to live, work, and raise a family. Thank you.

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

Investments Strengthen Saskatchewan

Travis Keisig: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's another great day in Saskatchewan. We are experiencing one of the strongest periods of growth and investments in this province's history. Our mining sector leads the way with BHP's approval of stage 2 at Jansen, bringing their total investment to nearly \$19 billion, while Nutrien, Cameco, Foran, NexGen, K+S, and Denison are all expanding production and advancing major projects in critical minerals and clean energy.

Our energy sector remains strong with Cenovus advancing its Spruce Lake North project and Cardinal Energy investing 155 million to new production online. Value-added agriculture is thriving. Louis Dreyfus, Cargill, Richardson, AGT Foods, and more are expanding processing capacity and creating jobs all across Saskatchewan.

We're seeing new investments in fertilizer, forestry, and manufacturing, helping diversify our economy. Our Crown corporations are making major commitments with SaskPower investing one and a half billion in the grid, and SaskTel investing 440 million. Saskatchewan is also attracting major tech investments including Bell Canada's 1.7 billion artificial intelligence data centre right here in our province.

These investments mean jobs and opportunities for so many of our young people. Their impact reaches every corner of Saskatchewan, strengthening the entire province. Saskatchewan is growing, Mr. Speaker. Investors are choosing our province. And this government is building a future that is strong, secure, and full of opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Gas Prices and Affordability

Carla Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You've got to admire the enthusiasm, but people in this province still are reporting higher rates of financial anxiety — that is, concern about their ability to pay their bills — than anywhere else in the entire country. And it's been that way for over a year. And it was certainly the case before the latest round of gas prices shooting up 40 cents a litre in just the last month alone because of the conflict in the Middle East.

So I have a simple question for the Premier: will he offer the people of this province some much-needed relief? Will he temporarily suspend his gas tax?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — I would say these are precisely the debates we should have on the floor of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. Over the last half a dozen years or so, we've seen quite the fluctuations

when it comes to the price for a barrel of oil, which are impacting everyday inflationary challenges that Saskatchewan families and Canadian families — and I would say around the globe — are feeling certainly, Mr. Speaker.

Back in 2020 in the early days of the pandemic, we saw the price of oil actually at negative \$7.50. Mr. Speaker, the early days of the Ukraine war, that skyrocketed up. But we see that up again with what is happening in the Strait of Hormuz, Mr. Speaker. That's why, in the most recent provincial election, Mr. Speaker, this party had ran on a platform of affordability measures in this province.

We know today that Saskatchewan is the most affordable province in the nation of Canada to live, Mr. Speaker, and we intend on keeping it that way. Mr. Speaker, those affordability measures were delivered on in last year's budget, and I would say they're going to continue to be delivered on in this year's budget. But we'll find out in just a few minutes, Mr. Speaker.

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

Carla Beck: — Of course these are extraordinary circumstances, and it's been less than a month that people in this province have been paying these record gas prices; I think it's over \$1.60 today in Regina alone, Mr. Speaker. And the Premier is taking in windfall revenues because of this conflict in the Middle East. Mr. Speaker, he could do it today. He could do it if he wanted to.

People in this province were already struggling before that 40-cent-a-litre hike in their gas prices. And it's on top of those SaskPower rate hikes that this Premier promised weren't going to come but ended up on people's bills anyway. It's also on top of recent rate hikes when it comes to insurance and so many other fees.

Mr. Speaker, why has this Premier decided that the people of this province don't deserve a break? And honestly what does he expect families in this province to do?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, in a few minutes we are going to see what is in this year's provincial budget. But what was in last year's provincial budget when it came to affordability measures, annualized each and every year, was two and a half billion dollars of investment, Mr. Speaker.

Those dollars ensured that income tax for everyone in this province was reduced, saving a family of four \$3,400 or single couples \$3,100 over four years. It ensured that there was 166,000 people now in this province that don't pay one dollar of provincial income tax, Mr. Speaker. And it ensures that Saskatchewan today remains the most affordable province to live by ensuring that we don't pay the carbon tax on our electrical bills, Mr. Speaker.

That would change with the out-of-province consultant that the members opposite have brought forward. Their big, bold energy plan, Mr. Speaker, where on page 8 it unequivocally commits to reinstating the carbon tax in Saskatchewan.

Thankfully that is not the place where we are today. We have a

government that is committed to affordability measures and committed to not implementing ridiculous, ineffective taxes like the carbon tax.

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

SaskPower Rates

Carla Beck: — Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the Premier could get a consultant to help him read that report.

But speaking of that Premier's SaskPower rate hikes, we've seen SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] speak out against this rate hike, and we've seen the CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business] amongst others speak out against it. They've spoken out because it will hammer families, small businesses in this province, and it'll hammer those who are just simply trying to balance the family budget. It's a \$136 million hike, Mr. Speaker, and people in this province cannot afford it.

That was not in last year's budget. In fact, on December the 4th the Premier stood in this very Assembly and announced that there would be no rate hike. It showed up less than a month later.

Mr. Speaker, might I suggest to the Premier that he take in some of this sage advice and that he scraps that rate hike today.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, as I said, Saskatchewan not only remains the most affordable province in the nation of Canada to live; we have the second-lowest utility bundle in the nation of Canada. That includes the power rates that we have, Mr. Speaker.

What do you think those power rates would do, Mr. Speaker, when the NDP would act on their out-of-province consultant's recommendations to not only bring back in the carbon tax but to . . . And I'm quoting off page 10, especially under policy: lower generation would be supplemented by imports, which would, in their opinion, lead to some lower rates.

Essentially what that is, that is moving jobs, power production jobs, from Saskatchewan to other provinces or maybe some of the United States of America. Maybe that's what their American consultant had provided to them, or their out-of-province consultant, pardon me, Mr. Speaker.

Thankfully we are in a place where we are guided, when it comes to power rates, by an affordable, reliable power system for all of the residents that live here and for the businesses that employ the residents that live here, Mr. Speaker. It's carbon tax free today, the only carbon tax-free province in the nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to make every intent to keep it that way.

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

Aleana Young: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My notes here, they say that yesterday the Premier held up a copy of independent expert analysis on an electricity plan that said on

page 8 there was a plan to double power rates. But he's done it again here today, Mr. Speaker. A plan that's going to double power rates on top of the \$136 million hike he's already slapping families, farms, and small businesses in Saskatchewan with. If only his crack research team had shown him page 7, Mr. Speaker, which clearly says — there's only two words on it — "government plans."

I'm glad that the Premier agrees with us that the independent research shows that his plan will make life more expensive for families, farms, and small businesses. So will he, Mr. Speaker, will he commit to not doubling rates today?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — It's their out-of-province consultant. It's their commitment to the carbon tax and reinstating that, Mr. Speaker. And it's their commitment to ensure that our province is not energy sovereign by outsourcing that electricity generation, Mr. Speaker, which would stymie investments like we saw earlier this week.

Mr. Speaker, one of the top three investments in the nation's history: a data centre just south of the city of Regina. Mr. Speaker, a \$12 billion investment. Add it to the largest potash mine that's being constructed. Add it to a couple of uranium mines, a copper mine, Mr. Speaker, many ag value-added sectors. Sixty projects totalling over \$60 billion being invested in this province, Mr. Speaker, because we have some of the lowest utility rates across the nation of Canada.

And I would just say this has been a very difficult and disgraceful week for the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. We saw earlier this week the NDP leader defend her party's hate-filled fundraising email, Mr. Speaker.

And I would say historically in this province we even saw Cam Broten do the correct thing. He fired his campaign director. He fired four candidates for personal social media posts, not posts that were made under the party banner, approved by the newly appointed campaign director and the Leader of the Opposition. Statements made not at a policy, Mr. Speaker, but hate-filled statements made at individuals that have chosen to serve their province.

And I ask the member opposite again, the Leader of the Opposition, will she do the right thing and fire her campaign director?

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

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier's just been embarrassed because he read out a plan that turned out to be his own plan to double power rates in this province. And honestly I'm a bit embarrassed for him. And I am genuinely sorry that he's chosen to go down this road today in front of all of these guests in the gallery.

Mr. Speaker, if the Premier wants to start comparing his record to mine, wants to start talking about targeted hate and decisions that leaders have made and not made, he knows what he did in the last election. And I will be happy to detail every piece of that on the floor of this Assembly. But I don't think that's why people

are here, to hear that.

Mr. Speaker, I never asked the Premier to fire his campaign manager after that happened. I asked for him to have kept his word. And if he wants to keep going, we will. But are we going to, Mr. Premier, talk about the budget, or are we going to keep going down this road?

[14:00]

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I will quote from that email: “Just take a moment and think of the faces of all the ones you hate so much — Scott Moe, Tim McLeod, Jeremy Harrison, Jeremy Cockrill.”

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the plan that this government has when it comes to growing and ensuring that our Saskatchewan communities can continue to be vibrant communities not only today but into the future: we have a plan when it comes to ensuring that Saskatchewan has affordable, reliable power rates for all the residents that are here today and each of the residents and families across the nation in years ahead, Mr. Speaker.

That’s why we are going to ensure that Saskatchewan is not going to pay inflationary carbon taxes that don’t achieve what they’re set out to do. Like that carbon tax, Mr. Speaker, that has been instituted, like the out-of-province consultant has recommended the members opposite would do in their plan, Mr. Speaker.

We are going to ensure that we create an environment that attracts investment, like the 60 projects worth over \$60 billion that are currently under way in the province. And that’s just us getting going and setting pace in this province, Mr. Speaker. And I thank everyone that has been involved in that that’s here today and across the province as well, Mr. Speaker.

And we are going to ensure that we have market access in the 160-plus countries that we sell to around the world. Not just today, but we’re going to expand the products that we sell to them, creating energy and food security for so many global citizens, allied citizens around the world, Mr. Speaker.

That’s the Saskatchewan government’s plan. That’s the Saskatchewan Party government’s plan, is to ensure that we are enabling Saskatchewan citizens to make their community better, Mr. Speaker, today and into the future.

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

Government’s Fiscal Management

Trent Wotherspoon: — You know, Mr. Speaker, the people, the good people of this province are gathered here today, and they deserve a bit of a budget debate. They’re going to hear the budget here very soon, Mr. Speaker. We’re going to see how that last one turned out.

You know, this government, that Premier has mismanaged our finances, and our provincial debt has ballooned. During this

Premier’s time in office, that debt has doubled. That Premier’s debt has nearly doubled that racked up by Premier Devine; more than three times that of Premier Wall. All while this government hikes costs and taxes for Saskatchewan people. And services like health and education are at a breaking point.

How does that Premier and this Sask Party government defend this record of mismanaging our finances and sticking Saskatchewan people with the costs, time and time again?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — I’ve spoken to some of the positive economic news, the investments that we see happening in this province that are going to create jobs in community after community after community. Developing the natural resources that we have, whether it be in the mining sector, the ag value-added sector, the oil production sector, Mr. Speaker. Significant interest in investment happening there as we are a global energy security provider, not just a food security provider, Mr. Speaker. What we saw this week was advancements into the AI [artificial intelligence] sector with a \$12 billion investment in that Bell Canada centre south of the city, Mr. Speaker.

But the challenges and the uncertainty globally are very present, and we’re seeing that in provincial budgets across this nation, Mr. Speaker. We saw in Nova Scotia just this week, a per capita deficit in Nova Scotia of just over \$1,000 — \$1,089, Mr. Speaker. We saw earlier in Alberta, a \$1,864 per capita deficit in that province, Mr. Speaker. New Brunswick earlier was \$1,611 was their per capita deficit. And in NDP British Columbia, if anybody’s wondering what the NDP will deliver when it comes to budgets: \$2,340 for each and every person in British Columbia is the deficit just this year, Mr. Speaker.

I encourage everyone to do the math in just a few minutes and stack up our provincial situation, our fiscal situation, our investment environment, where our province is, where our province is going, to any other province across the nation, in particular those led by NDP governments.

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

Trent Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, we’re proud to celebrate any day of the week the business leaders and workers in industry who build this province. They’re holding up their end of the bargain, Mr. Speaker.

It’s that Premier that is failing to hold up his end of the bargain. Mr. Speaker, he’s racked up record debt. He’s stuck people with the cost. His record of mismanagement on project after project and blown budget after blown budget all comes at a cost to Saskatchewan people.

Now Saskatchewan people, they work damned hard for their money. They deserve a government that’s going to deliver value for money and that’s going to deliver in areas like health care and education and keep communities safe. Not waste money on mismanaged projects. Not waste money on ballooning debt-servicing costs for that ballooning debt. Now this last year: a billion dollars just to pay the interest payments on that ballooning debt.

How on earth does this Premier think that Saskatchewan people want to pay for his ballooning debt-servicing costs and ballooning debt as opposed to the things that matter in health, education, and cost of living?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, it was a number of years ago we had a surplus in this province. We paid back over a billion dollars in debt in this province. And we answered questions for weeks on end, Mr. Speaker, of why aren't you doing this with this money, why aren't you doing this with this money. We felt it prudent in times of surplus, times when maybe some of the natural resource prices are up, that we pay down the debt that we have in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Two years ago we had a balanced budget. Today we are very much experiencing much of the headwinds that other provinces and other global citizens are facing as well. I read out the comparisons of a per capita deficit situation of what we have seen so far this spring in the nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

But it's important for us to remember, when it comes to Saskatchewan, due to the strength of our economy — of which I spoke about with the investments and the strength of that economy moving forward — that we are the second-lowest net debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] in the nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker. We have the best credit rating of any province across the nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker, and we have the lowest unemployment rate.

That's the Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that I know and I love. And that's the Saskatchewan that we are going to ensure is here for days and months and years into the future.

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

Provision of Health Care

Meara Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Quite the performance. The Premier and the Health minister claim to have the most aggressive and successful health care recruitment plan in the country. But it's strange, Mr. Speaker: data from CIHI, the Canadian Institute for Health Information, released just last month, that Saskatchewan has actually lost doctors, and many of the physicians working today are due to retire any day, Mr. Speaker. That same data shows we rank dead last in Canada for access to primary care.

So question to the Premier: if this is what success in health care looks like, what exactly would failure look like?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — You know, Mr. Speaker, it's easy to oppose, but solutions are more difficult. We've seen from the NDP opposition, opposition to virtual care, Mr. Speaker. Introducing motions on the floor of this legislature to ban virtual care right across the province, Mr. Speaker. Opposition to publicly funded, privately delivered surgeries, of which nearly 200,000 have been delivered since we began our partnership with the community partner, Mr. Speaker. That's nearly 200,000

Saskatchewan people that would have had to wait longer for their surgery, Mr. Speaker.

Our plan, the patients-first plan, is a solution-focused plan. Fifty next steps, Mr. Speaker, all the way from training to treatment, to ensure that we're training more physicians, more nurse practitioners, and giving patients better access to get the right care at the right time.

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

Meara Conway: — Mr. Speaker, maybe this time they mean it. Maybe. But this government touted a new recruitment plan to bring in front-line health care workers from the United States. Sounds like a great idea, right. And this Premier, who loves to talk about NDP British Columbia, well let's look at what they've done. It was announced just this week they've brought in over 400 Americans to help with their health care system just this year.

Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? Well this government has recruited three. The minister says the Health Authority has signed three offers of employment, and it's not even clear that they're working in Saskatchewan yet or if these offers have been accepted.

Why is the Premier failing to recruit desperately needed health care workers to Saskatchewan from the US or from anywhere else in the world for that matter?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — That's true, Mr. Speaker. We have signed three employment contracts with American health care professionals, Mr. Speaker. We actually have 15 American physicians that were at various stages of the recruitment process currently, Mr. Speaker.

But I would encourage that member opposite, reach out to her NDP friends in BC [British Columbia] and ask the hard questions. How many of those 400 health care workers actually live in BC? How many are providing locum coverage in BC and still living in the United States, Mr. Speaker?

It's also quite interesting coming specifically from that member opposite, who stood on the floor of this legislature just last week — page 1802 in *Hansard* — and discouraged Saskatchewan youth from going into a career in health care, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — Okay, I'm asked to avoid something that is under consideration and I'm making a ruling on, please. I'd ask you to withdraw that actually.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — I'll withdraw and apologize as you consider that.

Speaker Goudy: — Thanks. And at the same time, "maybe they mean it this time, maybe" . . . So let's give the benefit of the doubt to one another.

I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Hospital Parking Fees

Jared Clarke: — Now, Mr. Speaker, that Sask Party government isn't just making life harder for health care workers; they're putting strain on patients too. Cancer patients in Prince Albert used to be able to park at the hospital for free. Then the Sask Party government decided to slap a fee on them. So last week I put forward a private member's bill to ban parking fees at health centres for cancer patients going in for their treatment.

Will that minister commit to passing my bill? Or will he and his colleagues vote to continue to nickel and dime cancer patients who are fighting for their lives?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Mr. Speaker, it's interesting the member opposite brings up Prince Albert. A billion-dollar hospital being constructed in the city of Prince Albert right now. This government decided to waive the community share, Mr. Speaker, saving Prince Albert taxpayers \$200 million, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to the parking policy of the Saskatchewan Health Authority, I'd be happy to have that debate on the floor of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. At this time there's no plans to change that.

In a couple of minutes, you're going to see a significant investment by this government into the health care of this province. We want all of those dollars going towards patient-focused care, Mr. Speaker, making sure that patients can get the right care at the right time and as close to home as possible.

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

Jared Clarke: — Mr. Speaker, if I drive downtown today and park at Casino Regina, which is government owned, it will not cost me one cent. But cancer patients getting treatment in Prince Albert, well they need to pay for that privilege. They're supposed to be focusing on their recovery, and instead they're sitting there during their treatment worrying if they're going to be charged for an extra hour. That's heartless, Mr. Speaker. There's no other word for it.

So why is the government charging some cancer patients in some communities for parking and not others?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Mr. Speaker, it's difficult to take the opposition NDP seriously when we're comparing casinos to hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said on the floor of this Assembly many times, the parking fees collected at various health care facilities go into the maintenance and upkeep of those parking lots, ensuring that the investment that's going to be made by this government in just a few minutes — billions and billions of dollars — will go directly to patient care, ensuring that patients get the right care at the right time.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Government Response to Wildfires in the North

Leroy Laliberte: — Mr. Speaker, last year's fires burned across northern Saskatchewan. Many people were forced from their homes; others lost their homes altogether.

This government's approach lacked the resources and coordination required to keep the people safe. They need a real strategy, Mr. Speaker. That's why I brought forward my private member's bill, *The Saskatchewan Wildfire Strategy Act*. It would require the government to work with local communities and make sure that we never repeat last summer's wildfires.

My only question, Mr. Speaker, is, will this government support that legislation?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency.

Hon. Michael Weger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I deeply sympathize with those affected by the devastating and unprecedented 2025 wildfire season. I cannot imagine the challenges those faced that lost their homes, lost their businesses during this past year, Mr. Speaker.

But I also want to take this time, Mr. Speaker, to thank the wildland firefighters from across Saskatchewan, Canada, and internationally — many of which are present with us today — and thank them, for when Saskatchewan needed their help, they answered the call and they came to help, Mr. Speaker.

[14:15]

And, Mr. Speaker, after every fire season we conduct after-action reviews to improve the response. And those internal after-action reviews, along with an independent MNP review, will provide us recommendations for this next fire season. And the people of Saskatchewan should be confident, Mr. Speaker, that we'll do everything to keep them safe and secure.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

TABLING OF ESTIMATES AND SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

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

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

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2027, and supplementary estimates no. 2 of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2026,

and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

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

Please be seated. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

MOTIONS

Approval of Budgetary Policy (Budget Debate)

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I get into the prepared address today, I want to take just a minute to join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming everyone to their Assembly today.

Mr. Speaker, a little bit of leeway is given, as you know, to the Minister of Finance on budget day. While everyone else doesn't get to introduce their family, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take that opportunity.

A year ago on budget day, I had the opportunity for the first time to introduce my wife, Bonnie, to the Legislative Assembly. And she's come back, so it couldn't have been that bad. So please give Bonnie a warm welcome to her Legislative Assembly. Accompanying Bonnie is her sister, and my sister-in-law, Sharie Jensen. Please welcome Sharie as well. And I also have a number of friends and supporters from Rosetown and area that are here as well, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to get an opportunity to speak a little bit about them next week when I have the privilege of closing the debate on the budget.

Mr. Speaker, it's my honour and privilege to present the 2026-27 Saskatchewan budget this afternoon. It's our government's 19th budget. Today's budget is being presented at a time of significant global economic and geopolitical turmoil. The tariffs imposed by the US administration on virtually every country are affecting our economy and upending trade relationships around the world.

Every province in Canada has been impacted, and while Saskatchewan's strong and diverse economy puts us in a better position than most, we're not immune. Tariffs and other world events like the conflict in the Middle East have an impact on our economy and on our provincial finances. So as we prepared this budget we had a choice: raise taxes, cut services, or protect Saskatchewan. We chose to protect Saskatchewan.

This budget protects our economy and jobs. It protects Saskatchewan households by keeping the federal carbon tax off their monthly bills. It protects communities by hiring more police officers. It protects vulnerable individuals, including our friends and family members struggling with mental health and addictions challenges. It protects communities from wildfires. It protects our education system, students, and schools. It protects our agriculture sector, producers, farmers, and ranchers. It protects drivers by making our highways safer. And it protects law-abiding firearms owners.

We have listened to Saskatchewan people, and the top two concerns we have heard are affordability and access to health care. This budget addresses both. It protects Saskatchewan families by lowering taxes to make life more affordable, and it

protects patients by investing in the patients-first health care plan, announced by the Premier last week, to ensure everyone can get the right care in the right place at the right time.

The new provincial budget is protecting Saskatchewan. We can do that because Saskatchewan has a strong and growing economy. Our government is focused on strengthening our economy through diversifying our trade markets. This is accomplished by expanding our trade offices, building relationships around the world, and by focusing on results rather than politics.

While our relationship with the US has become more challenging of late, we have reduced our trade dependence on the US. We've also been able to work more closely with the new Prime Minister than with his predecessor. In just the past few weeks, our Premier joined Prime Minister Carney on trade missions to China and India. In China an agreement was signed that reduced Chinese tariffs on canola and other Canadian agricultural products. In India the Premier joined the Prime Minister as Cameco signed a \$2.6 billion deal to supply uranium through 2035, which means reliable electricity for India and good jobs for northern Saskatchewan and more revenue for the province.

We will continue working to expand our export markets around the world, because unlike some in the Assembly who have criticized our trade efforts and even campaigned on closing Saskatchewan's trade offices, our government did not suddenly discover the importance of growing and diversifying trade following the election of Donald Trump. These important trade deals are the result of years of hard work and relationship building and being in foreign markets to tell Saskatchewan's story to the world because we have a great story to tell.

Saskatchewan has what the world needs, and our government is making sure the world knows it. We are joined today by many people whose businesses are producing what the world needs, expanding their export markets, and creating new jobs here at home. I can't introduce you all, but I'd like to thank you for everything that you do for Saskatchewan to build our economy, to create jobs, and make this the best place to live in Canada. And we applaud you.

Expanding and diversifying our export markets is one way that we're protecting our economy, and it's working. In 2025 Saskatchewan had the lowest unemployment rate among provinces, the highest growth in housing starts, the highest growth in private capital investments. Our GDP reached an all-time high of nearly \$90 billion. And today Saskatchewan's unemployment rate remains the lowest in the country. And we also have the strongest rate of full-time employment growth in Canada.

This strong economic performance is set to continue as private-sector forecasters expect Saskatchewan to have the second-fastest-growing economy among provinces in both 2026 and 2027. This budget also protects Saskatchewan's economy through investments and developing the province's workforce to ensure workers have the skills and training they need to support a growing economy. And this budget provides ongoing support for Saskatchewan businesses by maintaining the small-business tax rate permanently at 1 per cent, saving them \$50 million annually in taxes that can be reinvested in the economy.

Saskatchewan's strong and stable business climate positions the province well to attract new investments. There are currently about 60 large-scale projects in planning or under way in Saskatchewan, projects worth over \$60 billion, Mr. Speaker: new uranium mines, the largest potash mine in the world, a new copper mine, canola crush plants and other ag value-added projects, forestry, oil and gas, manufacturing. The list goes on. And just this week our Premier joined with Bell Canada to announce one of the largest projects ever built in our country. A new \$12 billion data centre will be built just outside of Regina.

These projects will create thousands of construction jobs as they're being built and thousands more good-paying permanent jobs all across the province once they're complete.

Mr. Speaker, we recently heard one of the members opposite say that there's nothing to be proud of in Saskatchewan. We don't believe that. And more importantly, the companies who are investing \$60 billion in our province and the workers who are building those 60 major projects don't believe that either. They know there's a lot to be proud of in Saskatchewan. I know many of those companies are represented here today. So to you and through you to all of your thousands of employees, thank you for your incredible vote of confidence in Saskatchewan.

The strength of our economy means we can make life more affordable for Saskatchewan people. In the 2024 election, our government ran on a four-year plan to make life more affordable. Unlike some provincial governments who are using the current economic challenges as an excuse to break their election promises on affordability, our government has kept and will continue to keep every one of the affordability commitments we made to make life more affordable for students, for seniors, for homeowners, for families, and for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is protecting Saskatchewan residents with two and a half billion dollars in annual affordability measures. It builds on commitments introduced last year in *The Saskatchewan Affordability Act* by implementing the second year of our four-year commitment to lowering income taxes for everyone.

The personal, spousal, equivalent-to-spouse, and child exemptions, as well as the seniors' supplement will all increase by \$500 each again this year. And the Saskatchewan low-income tax credit will be increased by another 5 per cent this year.

On top of these tax cuts, annual indexation will provide Saskatchewan residents a further \$42 million in tax savings this year. These tax cuts, combined with the indexation, are providing about \$200 million in tax savings this year, meaning a family of four pays no income tax, provincial income tax, on their first \$65,000 of income. That's the highest tax-free threshold in all of Canada. A family of four earning \$100,000 will be paying \$4,400 less in income tax than they would have when our government was first elected in 2007. And these, Mr. Speaker, are not one-time savings; they are ongoing savings that save families money every year, year after year.

And there's more. *The Saskatchewan Affordability Act* also fulfilled all of our other commitments to make life more affordable. We increased the first-time homebuyers tax credit. We brought back the home renovation tax credit. We increased

the graduation retention program. We introduced the fertility treatment tax credit. We doubled the active families benefit. We increased the disability and caregivers tax credits. We increased the personal care home benefit for seniors. And we removed the federal carbon tax on SaskPower's customers' bills.

The new budget protects Saskatchewan individuals and families by making life more affordable for everyone. Mr. Speaker, the '26-27 budget is protecting health care services by investing in the new patients-first health care plan to ensure everyone has access to the right care in the right place at the right time. Health is the largest expenditure in the province's budget with record funding of eight and a half billion dollars, an increase of \$393 million, or nearly 5 per cent.

Our government has been listening to Saskatchewan residents. And the two main concerns we heard are, people want access to a primary care provider — a doctor or a nurse practitioner; and they want diagnostics and surgery in a more timely manner. This year's health budget invests in more than 50 specific actions outlined in the patients-first health care plan including: increasing the number and expanding the scope of practice for all health care professionals; expanding access to virtual care; increasing the number of and access to urgent care centres throughout the entire province; continuing to recruit, train, and increase the number of doctors, nurses, and nurse practitioners; and expansion of diagnostic services like MRIs and CT scans.

This budget makes significant investments to continue the largest nurse practitioner expansion in provincial history which will see thousands more patients connected with a primary care provider. Access to primary care and timely surgeries are being improved through the stabilization of emergency departments, continuing the expansion of hospital bed capacity in Saskatoon, and augmenting critical care supports.

[14:30]

Additional investments will continue addressing capacity for Saskatoon hospitals with 60 new permanent acute in-patient beds between Royal University and St. Paul's hospitals.

Substantial increases will support pediatric enhancements across Saskatchewan to ensure safe, sustainable care for critically ill and premature infants, and children requiring specialized services.

Multiple sclerosis patients will be better supported with a future comprehensive Regina-based MS [multiple sclerosis] clinic offering specialized care closer to home, improving quality of life and long-term health outcomes.

Increased funding to the provincial genetics and metabolics program will provide critical diagnostic and treatment pathways for individuals and families affected by complex or rare health conditions.

The budget also makes significant investments in health care infrastructure with over \$636 million in capital for health care facilities including: ongoing construction of the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital acute care tower; construction of a new specialized long-term care facility in Regina; replacement of the long-term care home in Grenfell; the Royal University Hospital ICU [intensive care unit] expansion project; starting construction

on the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency Saskatoon Patient Lodge; completion of the Saskatoon urgent care centre; completion of the pre-design phase and start of design work for the Yorton hospital project; funding to support ongoing plans for new urgent care centres in Moose Jaw and North Battleford, Prince Albert, Regina, and Saskatoon.

And it's also important to note that our government is reducing the community contribution for design and construction costs of new health care facilities from 20 per cent to 10 per cent meaning that more dollars stay in your community to address your local priorities.

The budget also protects those facing mental health and addictions challenges by expanding access to mental health and addictions services, opening more treatment spaces, creating a new secure youth detox site, supporting individuals in specific stages of their recovery journey, and making the system easier to access so patients and families can receive the help that they need. This budget will invest in opening approximately 200 more addictions treatment spaces, fulfilling the government's commitment to create 500 new spaces.

Operating funding is being provided for two new complex-needs facilities in Prince Albert and North Battleford that will provide a safe place for individuals in crisis to stabilize while being monitored for negative effects of drugs or alcohol.

And the first phase of *The Compassionate Intervention Act* will be operationalized with an addiction treatment model used in rare cases where adults with severe and life-threatening addictions, who are unable to ask for help, will receive treatment.

This budget protects Saskatchewan by ensuring everyone is getting the care they need when they need it. Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the thousands of health professionals in our province who provide the best possible care to Saskatchewan people. I know some of them have joined us here today, so on behalf of everyone in Saskatchewan, thank you for all that you do.

Mr. Speaker, the '26-27 budget is also protecting Saskatchewan communities. The budget will provide an increase of \$50 million for Saskatchewan RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] operations and First Nations policing, as well as introducing a new small-town and rural policing grant program. Additional funding will go to the Saskatchewan Marshals Service, which became operational in spring of 2025, and for an increase in workforce capacity for the Saskatchewan Highway Patrol.

Funding for cities, towns, villages, and rural municipalities is increasing. This budget delivers another record amount for municipal revenue sharing at nearly \$400 million — that's up eight and a half per cent from last year — and municipal revenue sharing is now more than three times what it was when we were first given the privilege of forming government.

This is unconditional funding. That means our municipal leaders are free to use that money to invest in their communities as they see fit. They know better than anyone what is needed most in their city, town, village, or RM [rural municipality]. Mr. Speaker, there are many mayors, reeves, and councillors with us here today. And I would say, before I was first elected to this Assembly, my background was in local government, Mr.

Speaker, so I know that none of them are doing it for the pay. You do it for the love of your community and you want to make it a better place. So let's take a moment and thank all of them, please.

We're also joined by a number of volunteer firefighters and other first responders. Our government recognizes the risks that volunteer firefighters, emergency services personnel, and search and rescue teams face, and we thank them for the incredible work that they do. To recognize the important and sometimes heroic work to protect their communities and their friends and neighbours, I am pleased to announce that today in this budget our government is doubling the volunteer first responders tax credit from 3,000 to \$6,000.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there are a number of first responders and volunteer firefighters joining us today. So at the risk of missing a bunch of them, I am going to single out just a few. In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, we have Aaron Buckingham, who's president of the Volunteer Firefighters Association. We also have Kim Bennett from the Climax Fire Department, Cory Dean from Davidson, and Jim Schmit from Davidson fire department, and a number of others that I've missed. On behalf of the province of Saskatchewan, thank you for all the great work that you do.

The Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency is also receiving additional funding in this year's budget as part of a four-year commitment to purchase four repurposed land-based tanker aircraft. Last year was an unprecedented wildfire season in Saskatchewan, and we will continue to make the investments necessary to protect communities from wildfires.

Mr. Speaker, the '26-27 budget is indeed protecting communities. We are also protecting vulnerable people. This budget is about protecting our most vulnerable residents, those who need assistance for various reasons. Our government is providing predictable multi-year funding to municipalities for the provincial approach to homelessness to create up to 40 new shelter spaces, up to 60 new supportive housing spaces, and adding more trustee services to support individuals in transitioning to supportive housing.

The budget also increases funding for Saskatchewan income support clients by adding a \$1,000 one-time-per-household utility arrears repayable benefit to ensure clients can remain successfully housed. Saskatchewan income support and Saskatchewan assured income for disability — SIS and SAID as they're known — clients will receive a 2 per cent increase in benefits. As well, SAID residential support benefits for families that care for their loved ones at home will receive a 30 per cent increase over the next three years. This is a \$2 million investment in 2026-27.

Community-based organizations that provide important services to vulnerable residents will receive a funding increase of 2 per cent. More funding will be provided for individuals experiencing interpersonal violence through programs and services that enhance victim services, broaden housing supports, raise awareness of human trafficking, and improve access to legal and court-based resources.

This budget is also protecting victims and families by improving timely access to justice through investments in court

infrastructure and judicial capacity, including the appointment of four new Court of King's Bench associate judges, three new Provincial Court judges, six new justices of the peace, and two new Crown prosecutors.

The '26-27 budget is protecting education by ensuring students in Saskatchewan are getting their best start with an investment of two and a half billion dollars in school operating funding for the 2026-27 school year, an increase of \$62 million.

Increased funding for 50 additional specialized support classrooms across the province will bring the total up to 108. The specialized support classroom model provides targeted assistance to help students in building stronger self-regulation skills so they're better able to focus and participate, enhancing educator capacity to better support all students in the classroom.

The budget also makes significant capital investments in schools including a new joint-use middle and high school in Martensville-Warman, a new school in Shellbrook, and a major renovation of Esterhazy High School. Funding is also being provided to support the 20 new school builds and three major school renovations already under way, along with \$20 million for new relocatable classrooms that help school divisions manage space pressures.

The renewal of the child care agreement with the Government of Canada will provide continuity for child care operators and protect Saskatchewan families by ensuring they have continued access to affordable, high-quality early learning and child care.

A new multi-year funding agreement will provide stability and predictability for our post-secondary institutions. This agreement will provide post-secondary institutions with 3 per cent increases to operating funding each year over the next four years, which means stable funding that supports student success. The agreement also protects students by limiting annual tuition increases.

The budget also provides funding for loans, grants, and bursaries to protect affordability for students. This includes \$68 million for the enhanced graduate retention program that allows students to now receive up to \$24,000 in tax savings if they choose to start their career in Saskatchewan after graduation.

Saskatchewan continues to have one of the strongest economies in Canada, and we're among the strongest in provincial finances. This budget ensures that will continue. This budget continues the Government of Saskatchewan's focus on responsible fiscal management by investing in key priorities while not raising taxes or cutting services for the people of Saskatchewan. In the short term this means running a deficit in order to protect what matters most to Saskatchewan residents.

The '26-27 budget projects \$21.4 billion in revenue compared to \$22.2 billion in total expense, resulting in a deficit of \$819 million. That's the lowest budget deficit relative to size of the economy of any provincial budget presented to date, and I expect it will be among the lowest once all the provincial budgets are presented. For the out years, you will see in the budget a projection to be back in balance in four years.

Saskatchewan has the best credit rating of all provinces, and we

also retain the second-best net debt-to-GDP ratio in Canada.

While this budget protects Saskatchewan residents with lower taxes and important investments and vital services, we are also managing our finances carefully and continuing to reduce costs where possible.

One way we are doing this is through a vacancy management strategy within the public service. As retirements and voluntary departures occur within ministries and Crown corporations, our government will manage the size of its workforce and reduce expenses without eliminating any filled positions and without compromising front-line service by carefully reviewing each vacancy to determine whether it must be filled. By focusing on operational efficiencies rather than job cuts, expenses will be reduced while maintaining the high-quality service Saskatchewan people expect.

In conclusion, while tariffs and other world events will continue to have a huge impact on economy and finances, Saskatchewan is in the best position of any province in Canada to get through this turmoil and come out even stronger. In the meantime, we will protect Saskatchewan.

Last fall, everyone in Saskatchewan was thrilled to watch our Roughriders have a great season and win the Grey Cup. Our quarterback, Grey Cup MVP [most valuable player] Trevor Harris, had an incredible year, but that was only possible because his offensive line gave him time. He had a great year because he had great protection.

Saskatchewan will continue to achieve great things. We have the strongest economy in Canada, and it will get stronger. We're expanding our export markets all over the world, and we are attracting the investment needed to grow our economy. We are the most affordable place to live in Canada, and lower taxes for everyone will make life more affordable. Our patients-first health care plan will ensure everyone in our province has access to the right care at the right time.

All of these things and more are possible if we start by protecting Saskatchewan. Much like the Roughriders, our province is well positioned for success. This budget is protecting Saskatchewan.

[14:45]

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Carrot River Valley:

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

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance, seconded by the member from Carrot River Valley:

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

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

Trent Wotherspoon: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a tremendous honour to rise on the floor of the Saskatchewan Assembly here

on Treaty 4 territory, the homeland of the Métis, to enter the debate of the budget that was just presented on behalf of the official opposition.

And it's a tremendous honour to do so once again in a legislature that's filled with Saskatchewan people and leaders from all across our province that are gathered here today. From sector after sector, corner to corner to corner to corner, people and leaders that build, better, and serve the province that we all love — to all of you, on behalf of a grateful province, we say thank you. You are doing your part and more.

The times we face once again are of challenge. Putin's unforgivable war continues in Ukraine. The US president continues to threaten our nation and our economy. We face tariffs. And the recent war in the Middle East and its awful human consequences and losses are having cascading impacts, including driving the price of gas sky-high for families, farms, and businesses.

We may not have control over these issues, but we do have control over what happens right here in our province. As a province and in this budget, this government has the power to make choices that advance the interests and well-being of Saskatchewan. It's what we've all been sent here to do. Importantly, as people of this province report the highest level of financial stress and hardship in the nation, to offer cost-of-living relief for people who are working so very hard just to make ends meet — this budget does none of that.

Saskatchewan oil revenues have been sent surging because of the war in the Middle East, but for families, farms, and business, it's causing soaring inputs and prices, including at the pumps. We all hope this conflict is short lived, but it's driving up oil prices and revenues for this province. While it's doing so, there should be a corresponding temporary cut to fuel taxes to offer a bit of a break.

Far from offering any cost-of-living relief, the fact is that this disappointing budget makes life more expensive. Saskatchewan people are struggling with higher power bills, insurance, and all the taxes on groceries and kids' clothes and so many more that were imposed in the Sask Party government's 2017 budget — the biggest tax hike in Saskatchewan's history.

On top of that, this budget adds new taxes and fees on hunting and fishing — some of the best things in this province — and costing us more just to put a vehicle on the road. All of this after that Premier promised that this budget wouldn't hike any costs.

Now a solid budget would step up for the people of this province and would build and repair our broken health care system to ensure everyone receives the care they need, where and when they need it. This budget does none of that. In fact it'll force cuts with a 0.3 per cent increase over last year. A 0.3 per cent increase over last year. That clearly doesn't even keep pace with inflation. Nor does it provide a dollar to settle a fair contract with our health care workers who, might I say, work tirelessly on the front lines of health care each and every day, and that have been without a contract now for over three years.

All this while this government wastes hundreds of millions dollars on mismanaged IT projects, while they send women to private clinics in Calgary for mammograms at 10 times the cost,

and hundreds of millions on out-of-province contract nurses, many times the cost of a nurse here in the province, instead of building our Saskatchewan labour force.

Saskatchewan people now have the worst access to primary care — family doctors and nurse practitioners — in the country. Our emergency rooms are overwhelmed, leaving patients waiting several hours and sometimes days for care stuck in hallways. People are suffering in pain as they wait on the longest surgical wait-lists in Canada.

You know, that Sask Party government has broken our health care system, and it's pretty clear they aren't up to the task of fixing it. We need some serious and substantive measures and changes to get our health system out of last place and back on track and performing for people and patients in our province. And our team and our leader and our shadow minister are committed to nothing less.

This budget fails also on education, fails to provide students the classrooms and supports they deserve to live up to their full potential. Shorting students on the education they deserve shorts their future, and it shorts ours as a province.

This is a budget that fails to act to protect producers and crack down on illegal foreign farm landownership, from a government that has failed on this front for 18 years. And it's failed to support our common-sense legislation to crack down to do so, legislation that doesn't cost a penny.

This budget fails on acting to improve the trade-supporting transportation infrastructure and the performance of that transportation system that producers and exporters need — including pipelines, rail, ports — to get our world-class products to markets, global markets that we must continue to expand access to.

Saskatchewan used to be a place where you could keep your doors unlocked, but now many people in our province don't feel safe within their own communities. We need to get tough on crime, and we need to get tough on the causes of crime. This budget and this government continue to fail to make our communities safer.

A budget should always be measured in how it treats the most vulnerable among us. Now the fact that one out of three children that are six years old in our province lives in poverty should be acceptable to no one, and it should be acted on. And this budget also leaves too many people and families without the mental health and addictions support they need and deserve when they need it. The consequences of this are all too often tragic and known all too well to families right across this province.

And without a doubt a budget should be judged by its fiscal position that it leaves the province in. It's become crystal clear to the people of this province, the budgets of this government simply can't be taken at face value. Think back just to last year. When we were in this Assembly all gathered — many of you were here as well — that Finance minister claimed to have a \$12 million surplus. Now the people within this room and out in the rotunda immediately knew that was nonsense, and we took that Finance minister to task on that front. But the reality unfortunately is that that so-called \$12 million surplus, that

budget, was off by \$1.2 billion.

This is in the black and white of the third quarter financial report that's printed within the budget tabled here today. On top of that \$1.2 billion deficit, this year's budget has a deficit booked at over \$800 million — an \$800 million deficit even while they sell off a public asset for one-time gain to make their books look a little bit better.

With this budget, this Premier will double the debt — actually more than double the debt — to \$43.5 billion, adding \$3.6 billion in this year alone. As Premier, he's taken our debt from \$20 billion to \$43.5 billion, a \$23.5 billion increase in just eight years. That's more than twice the debt added by Premier Devine. And as a result, this Premier and his government are costing you more to pay for their mismanagement on front after front.

Get this: Saskatchewan people will pay \$1.2 billion this year just for the interest and payments on that debt, just to service that ballooning debt, a number that has more than doubled since that Premier took office, from \$560 million in 2018 when he became Premier to \$1.2 billion today. That's a \$660 million increase annually on the cost just to pay the interest and the payments on that ballooning debt.

If you could imagine, he's spending three times more to service his ballooning debt than on police in this budget. This fiscal mismanagement, waste, and chaos, it isn't sustainable. And it's always Saskatchewan people left to pay the price, let alone future generations — our kids and their kids. Without question, it's well past time to open the books in this province and get them back on track with the value for money, the accountability, and the performance that the people of this province deserve.

My message to the people of this incredible province is this: you don't have to settle for this. You deserve better. Change is possible. There's no question this beautiful province is filled with incredible potential and incredible people and leaders. So much to be proud of. No question we have what the world needs.

All of you gathered here today do so much each and every day. You hold up your end of the bargain and more. It's well past time that your government step up and did their part that's accountable, that's focused on delivering today and on building the bright future deserved by all in this province that we all love, a province and a future that must be filled with hope and opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, I won't be supporting this budget. I'll have more to say tomorrow in debate of this budget, and at this time I'll move that debate be now adjourned.

Speaker Goudy: — The member from Regina Mount Royal 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.

Resumption of Budget Debate

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

That debate on the motion "That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government" be resumed on Thursday, March 19th, 2026.

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

That debate on the motion "That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government" be resumed on Thursday, March 19th, 2026.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

Speaker Goudy: — So before I place the question on adjournment, I just want to thank everyone for taking time out of your week to be here for this very important day for Saskatchewan. I want to thank everyone who put a lot of hard work into making this day happen.

I would like to extend an invitation to all of our guests to join the members for tea in the Legislative Library to the right as you leave, or in room 218 to the left as you leave. And I would just wish you and all your families blessing in your communities and safe travels home as you leave later on today.

So at this time I will place the question. The Government House Leader has moved that this House does now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried. This House is now adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. Thanks.

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:00.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

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

Hon. Chris Beaudry
Minister of Energy and Resources

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

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Advanced Education
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the
Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill
Minister of Health

Hon. Kim Gartner
Minister of Highways

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister of Crown Investments Corporation
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for
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Saskatchewan Water Corporation
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Minister Responsible for Innovation
Minister Responsible for
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Hon. David Marit
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Water Security Agency

Hon. Tim McLeod
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Minister Responsible for the Firearms Secretariat

Hon. Jim Reiter
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

Hon. Alana Ross
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Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan

Hon. Darlene Rowden
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Minister Responsible for the
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Hon. Michael Weger
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Minister Responsible for the
Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency

Hon. Sean Wilson
Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement
Minister Responsible for the
Global Transportation Hub Authority