



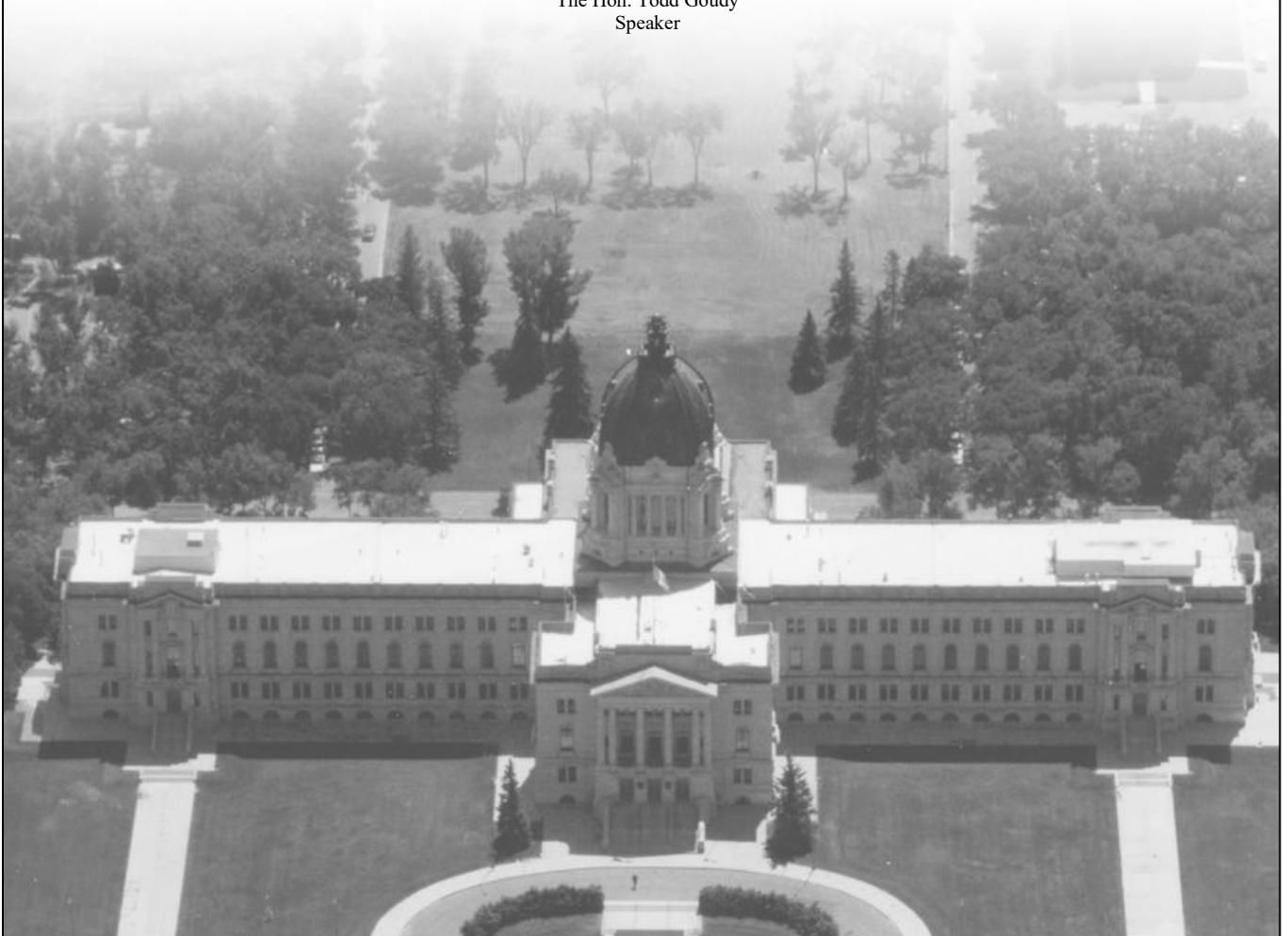
SECOND SESSION — THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE

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

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Iris Lang

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Principal Clerk — Danielle Humble-Selinger

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Sergeant-at-Arms — Lyall Frederiksen

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

TABLING OF REPORTS

Speaker Goudy: — I would like to table the annual report for the Ombudsman and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner, who is here with us today, pursuant to subsection 38(1) of *The Ombudsman Act, 2012*, the section 23(1) of the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner's Act. The Ombudsman has submitted the annual reports for the year 2026.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Speaker Goudy: — And so with that I'd like to introduce in our gallery the Ombudsman for Saskatchewan, who has tabled the annual report for 2025 today. In the annual report the office pays tribute to their Knowledge Keeper with journeying to his Creator this year. And so accompanying Ms. Pratchler is Delores Pratt — and welcome here today — the wife of the office's Knowledge Keeper, along with other members of the Pratt family.

Also present in the gallery are 15 members of the Ombudsman staff from both Saskatoon and Regina offices, so welcome to your legislature. Thank you for coming today, and thank you for all your hard work that you do for the province of Saskatchewan. So please join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

I recognize the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Alana Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave for an extended introduction.

Speaker Goudy: — The minister has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Hon. Alana Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, joining us on the floor of the gallery today are guests from First Steps Wellness Centre here in Regina: director of community, Andrew Schmidt; board member, Kelly Gallagher; director of operations, Sandi Marshall; and Paralympic athlete, Jessica Frotten. Jessica is a T53 wheelchair racer and client of First Steps that has achieved national and international success and records, from what I understand, in her sport of athletics.

First Steps Wellness Centre is the first activity-based therapy centre in Canada, and the host of Wheelchairs at the Legislature event this morning. You probably had the opportunity to see several members wheeling around the building today in wheelchairs, experiencing what that feeling is like. There will be more to come in a member's statement later about the great work they are doing here.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in welcoming Andrew, Kelly, Sandi, and Jessica to this, their Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

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

Erika Ritchie: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be on my feet and join with the minister opposite in welcoming our guests that are here today on behalf of First Steps Wellness. I had an opportunity to just say a quick hello to Andrew, Sandi, Jessica, and Kelly this morning after I had picked up my wheelchair and rolled myself down the aisle.

And I'm really looking forward to the opportunity to have that experience of what it's like to be in the use of a wheelchair and understand the barriers and challenges that that presents. I look forward to those conversations, and I ask all members to join me in welcoming these fine folks to their Assembly.

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

Hon. Lori Carr: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this week is Administrative Professionals Week. In the spirit of that, I would like to introduce a valued member of my team in Rural and Remote Health. In the west gallery, Pooja Jani joins us today. Give us a wave, Pooja. Thank you. She's been working in the building for the past two years. She started working for the Minister of SaskBuilds as a ministerial assistant for casework. And then she brought her skills to Parks, Culture and Sport, continuing to build her political experience before joining my office as a correspondence administrator.

Pooja is leaving us tomorrow to begin a new chapter to move closer to her husband. She will be missed by everyone on the Health team and all those who have had the pleasure of working with her. So I ask that all members please join me in welcoming Pooja to her Legislative Assembly and wishing her the best of luck in her future endeavours. Thank you, Pooja.

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

Trent Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask for an extended introduction.

Speaker Goudy: — The member has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Trent Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with you in welcoming the leadership from the Ombudsman's office and Sharon Pratchler here today, that impressive team. Thank them for all the work that they do, Mr. Speaker.

But very importantly, I want to honour the Pratt family. And I want to welcome Delores Pratt to her Assembly here today. And I want to welcome the other friends and family that have joined here today.

Mr. Speaker, we lost a legend in this community and in this province. And we will remember him forever because of the life that he lead and the difference that he made on so many fronts. The passing of Dolores's husband, Mr. Speaker, was a loss for

this community, but that legacy lives on.

Now we don't speak of his name, Mr. Speaker, is what we've been asked when an Indigenous leader passes. For one year is the request. But we can speak of him, and what I can say about this leader is, this was a trailblazer. He was rock solid. He was a leader in policing. He was a leader in the Armed Forces, the Canadian Forces. He was a bridge builder and a Knowledge Keeper, Mr. Speaker.

He made a difference for many. I know that . . . I think of many other policing leaders as well for whom he had the closest of bonds, and that legacy was there. I think of people like Tracey Dunningan and I think of Evan Bray and these leaders in policing within our province.

Now I knew this person, this leader, as just salt of the earth and someone who I would share hunting and fishing stories with, who would share the loving stories of his incredible family and of Dolores. He loved that entire family and all of those grandkids. And I'm very thankful for him. He was funny as heck, Mr. Speaker.

And I ask all members to send our love to Dolores Pratt and all those that mourn this leader, Mr. Speaker, that entire Pratt family. I want to say as well the funeral at Muscowpetung was absolutely beautiful and a complete demonstration of the kind of leader that Dolores's husband was. So I ask all members of this Assembly to honour this life and to send our love to Dolores Pratt and family.

Mr. Speaker, shifting gears just a little bit, it's my tremendous honour to welcome some of those I serve to this Assembly. We have in both the west gallery and the east gallery Mustangs, Mr. Speaker, McLurg Mustangs that have joined us here. Grade 7s and 8s, Mr. Speaker. They are joined here with their teachers as well. What an awesome bunch, Mr. Speaker. Give us a big wave, guys.

And I want to welcome their teachers that have joined us: Cheryl Bratton, Justine Galan, Bevan Nye, Carter Davenport. I thought Carter has a little bit of a likeness to McDavid up there. He's got the jersey on. I know tough loss last night. I know my boy was hurting with that one too, 1-1 now with the Ducks.

But I want to welcome all of these young leaders here. It's an honour to serve you. I look forward to sitting down with you and taking your questions afterwards and seeking your input. And I want to welcome you all here.

I do want to give just a special shout-out to a couple students that are here, couple that I've had the privilege of coaching over the years and watching grow within the community as well. So a special shout-out — I see over here — Henry Sitter, just an awesome hockey player. I hear the Skunks had a big victory last night, Henry. Good fisher, awesome guy. Good to have you here. Wonderful family. Ryder Bourne, he's a force on the ice. He's seated right beside Henry there as well. Wonderful to have you here as well, Ryder.

And then behind me over here in the east gallery is my de facto chief of staff, Mr. Speaker. That's Casey McKay up there. Awesome hockey player, awesome judgment, awesome kid,

great family. It's a real pleasure to have them here today. I want to ask all members of this Assembly to give these McLurg Mustangs the warmest of welcomes.

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

Blaine McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join in today in the Assembly and join with the member opposite in welcoming the Pratt family here to their legislature. I had the honour of standing in the House and reading a member's statement in regards to the great loss that the province of Saskatchewan suffered with the loss of your husband and father, and it was an honour for me to be able to do that.

Though not knowing him personally, I read a lot about what he accomplished in his life. And you have much to be thankful for and to remember with lots of joy in your hearts of what your father, what your husband was able to accomplish in his career, both militarily . . . I'm sorry. With the RC . . . I'll get it right yet. With the Regina city police, and also his involvement in military things as well where he performed so admirably. And a Knowledge Keeper. All the things that he accomplished with tremendous poise.

And with gratitude in our hearts, we express that today. So thank you for being here and for us having the opportunity to speak to you directly.

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

Meara Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege to be on my feet, but before I go on I will ask for leave for an extended introduction.

Speaker Goudy: — The member has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Meara Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. End of the week. Seated in your gallery we're joined today by a number of continuing care assistants. We have with us today Laura Guilbault, Annie Velychko, Jaime Hooper, Janel Korbo, Kristina Seufert, and Helen Head.

These folks work both in long-term care and in home care. They're on the front lines caring for our loved ones, Mr. Speaker. They are the hands that steady our seniors when they cannot. They are those who provide comfort and care often when families are not in a position to do so, Mr. Speaker. They show up day after day after day for the people that we love, Mr. Speaker.

And for all the dignity that they provide to those that they care for, they are too often denied that same dignity, Mr. Speaker. And we will be shining a light on some of the issues that they face in their day-to-day today. They're increasingly stretched thin in terms of staffing. They're increasingly dealing with more complex challenges, Mr. Speaker. And they're too often praised in words, but then we don't see the action reflect that praise, right, Mr. Speaker.

So I just want to say, you know, if we believe in caring for our seniors, our most vulnerable, in the best way that we can, we need to take care of the people that are doing that work. And when we fail the people that do that work, we are also failing those loved ones, those vulnerable people that they are caring for.

So I would ask all members in this Assembly to welcome these continuing care aides, assistants who offer that care to some of the most vulnerable, to some of the people that we love the very most in the world day in, day out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll join with the member opposite and welcome this delegation of continuing care assistants to this their legislature today. The member opposite, you know, is spot-on in terms of the quality of work that CCAs [continuing care aide] do in communities large and small right across the province.

[10:15]

I think about many of the CCAs that work in my own constituency and really the dignity that they treat seniors and vulnerable patients with. We are very grateful for that work each and every single day. I'd ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming these folks to this, their legislature, today.

Speaker Goudy: — One last comment or welcome is from myself to First Steps Wellness. I this morning was supposed to be in a wheelchair. Had an early morning meeting and had a lot going on today. So I foolishly — but you know, just absent-mindedly — asked a gentleman, a good friend of mine, Fred Hill, “Fred, I don't have time today to sit in a wheelchair. Would you sit in a wheelchair for me?”

And I ran out of the room and I ran down the hallway to get along my busy day. And ever since those words came out of my mouth this morning, I've been thinking, wow, I just asked a guy to sit in my wheelchair for me today. And I thought about all the people who are in a wheelchair who can't just say, “You know, I've got a busy day today. Could you sit in my wheelchair for me?”

So I just want to say the work that you do to help people navigate life, the things that so many people in this province do to help the ones that we often forget about with our busy lives, so bless you and thank you for all the good work that you do in serving the people of our province. And forgive people like me who are ignorant at times and just get on with our busy lives and forget about the things that you deal with daily. So thanks for being here, and thanks for all your good work that you do.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Aleana Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be on my feet during Infertility Awareness Week to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly calling for upfront funding for fertility care here in Saskatchewan.

While we do have a tax credit now in Saskatchewan, for which I

and so many across the province are very grateful, unfortunately that does nothing to provide upfront funding for those who are struggling to afford fertility care in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. This is something that impacts one in six people and those . . . The emotional toll cannot be lightened by any of us, Mr. Speaker, but the financial toll is something that we can impact. I'd like to share a brief story with members of the Assembly before I read the prayer.

Just this week I was speaking to one of our guests here in the Assembly, and they asked about this petition. And they shared a story of seeing one of their co-workers walking along the side of the road in their small town headed to work. And so they pulled over and said, why are you walking? I saw you driving. She said, well I'm trying to save money for one cycle of IVF [in vitro fertilization] and I can't afford to get into a car accident. I can't afford the gas. I can't afford to lose my vehicle if I want to be able save the \$40,000 that I need for that.

Mr. Speaker, this is someone in a professional field working in one of the constituencies served by members opposite, who's walking to work every day so that she can save her dollars, her nickels, every penny she can, to be able to afford a family, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately move to cover the financial burden of fertility care up to and including two rounds of in vitro fertilization treatments for those Saskatchewan people struggling with infertility.

The signatories of this petition today, Mr. Speaker, come from Yorkton, Saskatchewan. I do so present.

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

Brittney Senger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition calling on the Legislative Assembly to mandate intimate partner violence education.

The undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to your attention the following: that Saskatchewan has the highest rate per capita of interpersonal violence, otherwise known as domestic violence or IPV [intimate partner violence] in Canada; the economic impact of IPV in Canada is estimated at over \$7 billion a year; a large portion of tangible IPV costs are paid by the government for items like the criminal and civil justice system and health care system; that workplace orientation would include all genders from all walks of life and all areas of the province.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately mandate education on intimate partner violence be included in the orientation process for all new employees across all workplaces in the province.

The undersigned residents reside in Martensville and Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Darcy Warrington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be on my feet and rise today to present our petition calling for an overhaul of standards for eligibility to long-term care in Saskatchewan. You know, Mr. Speaker, we're joined by some wonderful, hard-working long-term care aides. I have many in my family and in my circle of friends that do the work that you do and we think very highly of you. But we also need to support those residents who are in their care.

The undersigned residents would like to bring to our attention the following: that seniors applying for long-term care homes in Saskatchewan say eligibility criteria are subjective and unclear; that wait times to be admitted to long-term care homes in Saskatchewan are several months long — the families with seniors on care home wait-lists may be forced to engage private home care in the meantime; that home care in Saskatchewan costs up to \$75 an hour, well outside the means of the average family.

I'll 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 work directly with seniors and long-term care homes to improve standards of eligibility for people seeking admittance to long-term care.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by citizens from Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Brent Blakley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly today to bring a petition calling on the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to implement rent control. These residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring attention to the following: that Saskatchewan leads the country in average rent increases; that without rent control, landlords can implement unchecked rent hikes, making housing increasingly unaffordable and unstable; that with rent control, residents can budget more effectively, potentially putting them in a position to save for a down payment on their own home; that British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island all have implemented rent control; that rent control becomes even more critical when you factor in the fact that Saskatchewan people continue to be slapped with the PST [provincial sales tax] on children's clothing, on grocery items, and with the gas tax that the government could suspend starting tomorrow, all of these making life more expensive for the people of this province.

The prayer reads as follows:

We 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 today reside in Lampman and in

Regina. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Saskatchewan Leader Receives Cartier-Macdonald Award

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a significant honour awarded to a respected Saskatchewan leader. The Canadian Constitution Foundation has named Bronwyn Eyre as the inaugural recipient of its new Cartier-Macdonald Award. This award highlights Canadians who have made exceptional contributions to constitutional freedoms, democratic principles, and the strength of our institutions.

Mr. Speaker, throughout her years with our government, Bronwyn has served in several key portfolios including Justice and Attorney General, Education, Advanced Education, and Energy and Resources. In each of these roles she contributed to major provincial initiatives from strengthening Saskatchewan's justice system to advancing opportunities for students and post-secondary institutions, and supporting responsible resource development that benefits communities across our province.

The Canadian Constitution Foundation noted her leadership on constitutional matters and her commitment to the role of elected legislators in Canada. They highlighted her work as an example of principled public service and dedication to the rule of law. Mr. Speaker, this award places a Saskatchewan voice on the national stage and it reflects years of service, hard work, and community involvement.

I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating Bronwyn Eyre on receiving this significant national honour and in recognizing her contributions to our province and to Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Huskies Wrestling Team Succeeds On and Off the Mat

Tajinder Grewal: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand before you today to recognize the University of Saskatchewan Huskies wrestling team.

Coached by Dan Olver, a constituent of Saskatoon University-Sutherland, this team has had immense success in the 2025 and 2026 season. The men's team won the seventh Canada West championship, their first since 2020. Meanwhile the women's team earned a gold medal, thanks to Myah Phillips. At the youth sports championship tournament, the men's team earned a hard-fought third-place finish, and the women's team earned a fifth place.

This team's impact goes far beyond the mat, as it has been an important role in community leadership. Their most notable community engagement is the Down to Wrestle program, which was started by Dan Olver and his neighbour Johann Reimer. Johann was looking for a sport where his son with Down

syndrome could fully participate. Dan noticed a gap and decided to work with Johann to create the Down to Wrestle program.

This one-of-a-kind program quickly evolved into something much bigger and has found tremendous success in developing athletic ability, confidence, and wrestling skills in these individuals, to see just one of many examples of how the USask [University of Saskatchewan] Huskies wrestling program has had a positive impact on the Saskatoon community.

Please join me to congratulate this wrestling team on their excellent work both on and off the mat.

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

Playoff Drafts and Calcuttas Support Saskatchewan Communities

Hon. Chris Beaudry: — Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan playoff hockey drafts and Calcuttas are a special time of the year. It is that magical season when people who've not laced up the blades in 20 years suddenly become armchair general managers, salary cap experts, and playoff prophets.

But behind the laughs, the chirping, and the questionable picks, these events do something very special for communities. This year Saint-Front raised \$47,000, Quill Lake \$49,000, and Wadena \$46,000. Mr. Speaker, that's not pocket change. That's real money that helps keep Kinsmen Clubs alive, rinks and halls open, and communities strong. And let's be honest. Only in Saskatchewan can a roomful of people spend an entire night arguing over playoff hockey, bidding like cattle buyers, and still walk out feeling like they did something to support, because they did.

Mr. Speaker, these playoff drafts also prove something else about Saskatchewan people. We will argue harder over a third-line winger in April than most people argue over politics all year long. One guy's convinced he's found a sleeper pick. Another guy's acting like he personally scouts every western road trip, and by the end of the night most of the room is certain they can run an NHL [National Hockey League] front office.

So I want to thank the volunteers, organizers, sponsors, and everyone who showed up, bought in, and maybe overpaid for a team to keep our communities strong.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Chief Mistawasis.

Constituent's Plan for Mandatory Interpersonal Violence Education

Don McBean: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak again about Joan McDonald, the first call I received from a constituent after the election, she reaching out to share the tragic story of her daughter's murder and her mission to address the scourge of IPV through a petition calling for mandatory workplace IPV education.

Joan and this petition have been brought forth many times already. This fall she was present in the gallery, introduced with

appropriate honouring. A bundle of petitions were tabled by the member from Saskatoon Southeast, a member's statement was read from the member of Regina Northeast, and questions regarding the introduction of the legislation were brought forward by the House Leader.

Curiously this was the day the government chose to pre-emptively call on the Committee of the Whole to push passage of their Bill 34. Fun fact, maybe karma, is how the following week Joan presented at a luncheon, at which a ministry official announced the amazing new media campaign targeting IPV. The audience innocently asked why this wasn't taught in the schools, allowing a few of us in attendance to explain Bill 137 and the exclusion of third-party educators.

[10:30]

The point: Joan's plan for mandatory workplace IPV education is straightforward and easily enacted. The government seems determined to not listen or act, but this will not stop us from trumpeting our support until this simple and obviously effective education program is legislated.

Thank you.

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

Cheerleading Teams Head to World Championships

Hon. Terry Jensen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over 1,000 young athletes from across our province took part in the 2026 Provincial Cheerleading Championships at TCU Place in Saskatoon on March 21st. Cheer and dance clubs came from far and wide, Mr. Speaker, including Saskatoon, Regina, Warman, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, The Battlefords, Yorkton, Swift Current, Martensville, Weyburn, and Biggar.

For athletes and their coaches, Mr. Speaker, it's been a remarkable season of learning new routines, new stunts, and working through some very demanding choreography. And for six all-star teams, their season will continue when they represent our province at the world championships taking place in Orlando, Florida this weekend.

Congratulations to Saskatoon's Prairie Fire Fever; Prairie Fire TNT; Regina's Boss Athletics Luxe; the Rebels cheer academy, Smoke, from Regina; the Alumni All-Star Royals Pom team, and of course Warman Ultimate Cheer Onyx on earning their bids to compete at worlds.

Mr. Speaker, cheerleading is a sport that demands focus and attention to the smallest details. Athletes dedicate hundreds of hours practising and perfecting their routines at gym clubs right across the province. The goal of all teams is to hit zero, Mr. Speaker — in other words, a flawless and perfect performance. But it's the sportsmanship and the friendships that are made that truly make the sport of cheerleading special.

On behalf of everyone in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we wish all of our cheerleading teams the best of luck this weekend at the world championships in Orlando, Florida.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Accountability of Government

Jordan McPhail: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On election night the Premier said that he had heard the message from voters and he promised to do better. He said that he had heard from voters about health care, education, affordability, and accountability.

All of these have slipped under the last 20 years of this Saskatchewan Party government. And in the year and a half since he made that promise, what has happened? Health care, education, and the cost of living are all getting worse, not better.

And on accountability, day after day we ask the Minister of Advanced Education why he continued to break the rules of this Assembly for years, and we ask for a basic level of transparency. Just release a copy of . . .

Speaker Goudy: — It's a member statement. I know. Who is up next? I recognize the member from White City-Qu'Appelle.

First Steps Wellness Centre Hosts Wheelchairs at the Legislature

Brad Crassweller: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take a moment today to recognize the important work being done by First Steps Wellness Centre. First Steps Wellness Centre has three locations throughout Canada, including here in Regina, Winnipeg, and Sherbrooke, Quebec. As Canada's first activity-based therapy centre, they provide specialized activity-based rehabilitation and services for individuals living with spinal cord injuries and other neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, and more.

By helping individuals improve functional ability and independence, the organization contributes to healthier communities and improved quality of life for Saskatchewan families.

Earlier this morning, First Steps hosted a Wheelchairs at the Legislature event which gave members of the Assembly an opportunity to experience first-hand some of the challenges and barriers faced by people who use wheelchairs in their daily lives. I was one of those individuals — a very challenging experience. And one quick take-away for myself is that in this building, the doors are very heavy and my arms are already sore.

I'd like to thank the staff, the volunteers, and the participants of First Steps Wellness Centre for their continued efforts to educate, support, and advocate for people living with physical disabilities in our province. And special thanks to Jessica, Andrew, Kelly, and Sandi for being here today and for all that you do. Thank you so much.

QUESTION PERIOD

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Affordability Measures

Nicole Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people cannot keep up with the rising cost of living. After nearly 20 years, this tired and out-of-touch

government is out of ideas, and they've forgotten who they're working for — the people of Saskatchewan. Fortunately we've come forward with a few ideas of our own to provide relief: ban unfair AI [artificial intelligence] price gouging, strike down unfair rules that limit grocery competition and keep prices high, and cut the fuel tax for families breaking the bank just to fill the tank.

Will the Premier for once take one of our ideas and cut families a break? Or better yet, will he take all three?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Affordability is front of mind for citizens across the province, across the country, Mr. Speaker, and front of mind for all my colleagues in government. That's why we have taken many actions on affordability, Mr. Speaker. The budget, over two and a half billion dollars worth of affordability measures.

We debated this on the floor of the Assembly many times, Mr. Speaker. There's a full suite of programs that we've used: the graduate retention program, the active families benefit, the list goes on, Mr. Speaker. The one that I think has the most direct impact on people are all the income tax changes, both for low-income people and for the entire population, Mr. Speaker. We are letting people keep more of their own money in their own pockets so they can make decisions on where they spend that money. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Government Response to Wildfires in the North

Nicole Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people aren't feeling that relief at all. This government has failed to make life affordable, and they've also failed to prepare for wildfire season once again.

Last year's wildfire response saw unprecedented failure, and a major reason was that 4 of the 10 water bombers sat grounded while entire communities burned. Now we have the Premier's own minister admitting that two water bombers will remain grounded this year until July, and another won't even arrive until August. A fourth bomber has gone missing from the government's website altogether.

How did the Premier lose four water bombers?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. Michael Weger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today on a day when I am experiencing life in a wheelchair, I just want to say I appreciate the ability to find my feet even more than ever.

Mr. Speaker, we've given updates. Mr. Speaker, I've been up to Prince Albert to meet with the SPSA [Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency]. We've given updates on our water bomber fleet, Mr. Speaker. We're aware of two water bombers that are currently being repaired. One contractor has been brought in to assist with those repairs. It's expected those water bombers will

be ready when needed this summer, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Jordan McPhail: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the minister not go to where the trees start, but go right to where they burned last year to see what the issues are up in the North.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe this. It's the worst form of déjà vu all over again. My constituents are already fearing the worst after last year, and this isn't going to help them sleep any better.

Three bombers grounded, a fourth missing. How did the minister fail the people of Saskatchewan so badly, and particularly my constituents in the North?

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

Hon. Michael Weger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And again I have heard from the people from the North, Mr. Speaker. I've met with people from Denare Beach, Flin Flon, Creighton, and I expect to go back to Denare Beach again on June 2nd, Mr. Speaker. Also speaking to individuals from Wadin Bay and planning a trip up to Wadin Bay in May as well, Mr. Speaker.

We'll continue to hear from the people of the North, let them know what we are doing as far as preparations for this wildfire season to ensure they're fully educated on what our response will be, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Jordan McPhail: — Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that minister brought up Wadin Bay because the reason why Wadin Bay is still here today is because they prepared to be abandoned by this government. So he cannot claim that it was his success; it was the Wadin Bay firefighters.

Mr. Speaker, entire communities burned last year. Two hundred homes in Denare Beach, more in East Trout Lake and Sucker River. People lost family homes of 50 years or more and still, clearly this government has learned nothing.

We know that the last Public Safety minister got bounced from his role for failing to do his job during the wildfire crisis. Is this replacement minister looking to lose his job as well?

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

Hon. Michael Weger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, first and foremost, again thank you to everyone that assisted with the wildfire season. And again my thoughts and concerns to everyone that was displaced from their home during the last wildfire season.

But, Mr. Speaker, this government did set up 31 temporary housing units in Creighton and Denare Beach. Those are operational. Our understanding is that every resident that was displaced has a place to reside, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue monitoring the situation. We're reviewing if there will be some residents coming back to the area while they're rebuilding this

summer, and making sure as well, Mr. Speaker, that there are accommodations in Creighton for those individuals.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Jordan McPhail: — Mr. Speaker, if that minister wanted to listen to northern voices, there's a bill on the floor of this legislature right now that would have them legislated into law.

Mr. Speaker, there's no accountability at all from that minister. Literally a plane that was on the government website at one point isn't there anymore. We shouldn't be surprised. This government rejected calls for an independent inquiry into the wildfire disaster. Then they promised a report from MNP in February. Mr. Speaker, today is April 23rd, and there is still no report from this government.

Will the Premier release all reports related to last year's wildfire disaster today? Yes or no?

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

Hon. Michael Weger: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite's correct. There is a report being done, an independent report by Meyers Norris Penny. We're anxiously awaiting that report, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, if that member opposite knew anything about how I operate, I would've wanted that report in January. But we're doing a fulsome report, Mr. Speaker. It's a matter of do you want it done . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — Order, please. Let's hear the minister out.

Hon. Michael Weger: — Mr. Speaker, I think sometimes the members opposite have to recognize it's a matter of do you want it done right, or do you want it done right now? We want it done right. We trust that MNP will be doing this report for us and getting us the full report very shortly, Mr. Speaker. We will review the report, and the report will be made public.

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

Contract Negotiations with Health Care Workers

Nathaniel Teed: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are joined today in the legislature by some incredible continuing care assistants. These folks are on the front line in our overrun long-term care and home care system. They see first-hand the failures of this government each and every day. They're also the lowest paid in the country. They haven't seen a wage increase for four years.

Why doesn't this Premier respect the work of these incredible continuing care assistants each and every day and get them a pay raise?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And again I'll agree with that member opposite. The work that continuing

care assistants do in our province is absolutely incredible. And in terms of serving the seniors and vulnerable people in our communities, we've already talked about that a little bit already this morning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are at the bargaining table with all of our provider union partners. In fact just this week, Mr. Speaker, we're at the bargaining table with our provider union partners. That is where we're going to get to a fair agreement, an agreement that works for our front-line health care workers as well as an agreement that works for our patients. Thank you.

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

Nathaniel Teed: — Mr. Speaker, it's all talk and no action. They don't want praise; they just want a fair deal. These continuing care aides who are joining us today earn \$3 an hour less than the national average. For context, the Premier's own SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] vice-president and former press secretary to the Premier, Jim Billington, earned as much on March 10th what these folks earn in an entire year.

Can the Premier explain why his buddies continue to make bank while front-line health care workers can't get a raise?

Speaker Goudy: — Insinuating that one of the hon. member's buddies are making bank? Would you stand and apologize for that, please?

Nathaniel Teed: — I withdraw and apologize, Mr. Speaker. I will reword the question. How can this Premier and his minister justify huge wage increases for the top brass at the SHA when front-line health care workers have gone without a raise for four years?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

[10:45]

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. We are keen on getting to an agreement, Mr. Speaker, with all of our provider union partners as well as the other bargaining tables that we currently have open, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to do that on the floor of the legislature. We do that at the bargaining table with our union partners, Mr. Speaker.

I am confident, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to get to an agreement that compensates our health care workers well, Mr. Speaker. Over the last couple of months we've added more bargaining dates, Mr. Speaker. We've asked SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations] and the SHA to refine employer priorities, Mr. Speaker. Again our focus is on getting a fair agreement that works for our health care workers and as well for patients.

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

Nathaniel Teed: — Mr. Speaker, the fact is that they've been negotiating for three years. We need a deal now, not in months. These folks have gone three years without a wage increase. We're hearing from these front-line health care workers who stop

at the food bank on their way home from a shift. We're hearing from front-line health care workers who are selling their blood plasma to buy food after a shift.

This is the reality that front-line health care workers are facing in Saskatchewan under this government. Of course many of these workers are leaving the province where they are expected to earn more money.

Does the Premier or the minister really have the audacity to defend this record when front-line health care workers are relying on food banks or having to rely on selling blood plasma just to get by?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill: — You know, Mr. Speaker, as some of my colleagues talk about on almost a daily basis, we recognize there are cost-of-living pressures, Mr. Speaker. And that is true for most folks in the province, Mr. Speaker. And the members opposite seem to forget, Mr. Speaker, that we did offer an interim retroactive payment at the bargaining table, Mr. Speaker.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I am confident that we are going to get to a fair agreement that pays our front-line health care workers well. We have to get though to an agreement that works both for workers and, as well, for patients, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we're at the bargaining table today. Even this week we've added more bargaining dates. We're going to continue to stay focused on getting to that fair agreement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for Child Care Providers

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government is failing child care providers in the communities in which they serve. The minister doesn't have to take my word for it. He can check his inbox. I have a letter here from Kelly Swayze, director of Carnduff Community Daycare, about how this government has, and I quote, "Left directors, who are experts in the field and manage these programs daily, feeling disrespected, discouraged, and unheard."

What does the minister have to say to child care centres in rural and urban communities like Carnduff who are speaking out and just want to be heard?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a government that is proud of the work that's been done in the child care sector across this province for the past number of years since signing an agreement with the federal government to deliver \$10-a-day daycare across Saskatchewan.

We've added tens of thousands of more spaces, Mr. Speaker. We've provided additional training for those in the sector; improved, increased their wages by 43 per cent for ECEs [early childhood educator] at various levels, Mr. Speaker. And again we engage directly with child care operators, with organizations like the Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association, or SECA, and

we engage with families, with parents, and with communities right across this province, Mr. Speaker.

It's why, as part of the work that this government was doing to renegotiate a new and a better deal with the federal government, we were able to achieve some of those accomplishments as part of the new agreement. And that is a direct result of some of the feedback that we've had from operators, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to do that as we implement the new agreement for the next five years for Saskatchewan and make sure that we engage with the sector and take their concerns seriously as we make these implementation decisions, Mr. Speaker.

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

Joan Pratchler: — Mr. Speaker, well he didn't engage with Carnduff, did he? These people are the people who keep our child care system running, and they care deeply about doing that. When experienced directors feel ignored, disrespected, and shut out, that is a failure of leadership from the Sask Party government. And they've been doing it for the past five years.

Swayze is calling on the minister to create an advisory committee of child care providers for meaningful input from across the province from experts on the front line who have a seat at the table that their expertise has rightfully earned. It's the least this government could do to fix this botched rollout. Will the minister commit to that today?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Everett Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A couple of points. Number one, the government does have an implementation committee which involves and encompasses a broad swath of child care operators that are part of that committee. The provincial government is part of that committee. It's a requirement as per the agreement with the federal government. The federal government also has a seat at that particular committee. And in addition to all the other consultation we do with the sector, that's where we gather feedback, through that committee. That is just one of many avenues.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we do take this information and these concerns seriously. For example, a couple of weeks ago we had an operator who was on local media, on the radio saying a couple of things. One, she was asking for a slowdown in space expansion because of the rapid growth over the past five years of the agreement. Mr. Speaker, as part of some of the things we announced today, that is part of it. We're going to have very targeted space expansion going forward.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, that operator also indicated when she was on the radio that she referenced the ability to have defined hours per day for child care. And she had specifically said, 10 hours per day. Mr. Speaker, that's what we announced today, was that we're going to have a defined number of hours per day. That's another example where we heard feedback from child care operators, and we're implementing that with the changes, Mr. Speaker.

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

Provincial Tax on Construction Labour

Trent Wotherspoon: — That Sask Party government has no record to be proud of when it comes to child care, and the same thing can be said about taxes, Mr. Speaker. This government has taxed and squandered and brought in the largest tax hike in Saskatchewan's history. Of course that included the PST on construction labour, that damaging tax.

Now here in Regina and across the province, construction costs are soaring, all made more expensive by that Sask Party government's PST on construction labour. Municipalities, they've spoken out about the damage of this tax. When will this Finance minister finally admit that his job-killing and cost-hiking tax was a mistake from day one?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, obviously we are very concerned about the level of taxation, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're lowering income tax for citizens across the province, Mr. Speaker, to help with affordability measures.

Despite all the bluster over there, Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. He's talking about job-killing tax, Mr. Speaker. Our economy, while not immune to the geopolitical forces around the world, Mr. Speaker, is the strongest in the country. That's why we have two of the biggest projects of the top three in the entire country going on right now, Mr. Speaker — private capital investment. Not government dollars, Mr. Speaker, private capital investment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Trent Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I guess just take him at his word, hey, Mr. Speaker, but don't look at their record. You know, the second-worst job creation record under that Premier, and that Finance minister who couldn't balance a budget and sticks people with the costs.

Now of course at the SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] convention we heard how damaging the PST is for municipalities, for our towns and villages and cities across this province when they're investing in infrastructure. It drives up costs with one level of government taxing another.

It shouldn't be this way. There's only one taxpayer. When will this Sask Party government do something about this double taxation that people and businesses see every month on their property tax bill that's driving up their costs?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, there were so many items thrown in there, Mr. Speaker, I don't know where to start. But I'll start with this. Mr. Speaker, he's saying, just take my word for it. No, Mr. Speaker, don't take my word for it. You know what, Mr. Speaker? Take the word of the bond rating agencies that say we have the best credit rating in the country, Mr. Speaker.

As far as comments on the municipalities, I come from the

municipal sector. Mr. Speaker . . .

[Interjections]

Speaker Goudy: — Order, please.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I was there during the dark days of the NDP [New Democratic Party] government where we would anxiously wait for the budget and hope, hope there was some shred of a municipal grant program to municipalities, Mr. Speaker. Those days are no more. Mr. Speaker, municipalities have a municipal revenue-sharing program that is the envy of the country, that they can count on, Mr. Speaker, that in spite of pressures, financial pressures this year, Mr. Speaker, got an 8 per cent increase this year.

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

Response to Spring Flooding Concerns

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly the other side has amnesia about how they bankrupted this province.

Mr. Speaker, the Water Security Agency has issued a high-flow advisory all the way from the Northwest to the Southeast. This means a large stretch of this province could be hit by serious flooding very soon.

This could get dangerous very quickly, Mr. Speaker. So to the minister: what is he doing to prepare for this emergency?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. David Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously we have seen some early flooding starting in some of the communities. Our Water Security folks are already looking at that. We're already going to establish a website, making sure that all communities are going to be informed of water and the movement of it. We're seeing it in the municipal world in some of the northern communities where we're starting to see the melt, where some of the roads are starting to wash. Mr. Speaker, we're going to be in close proximity and close contact with all those municipalities and work with them through the time through the spring thaw.

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

Hugh Gordon: — The people of Saskatchewan would like to believe that Sask Party government will manage this crisis effectively and safely, myself included, Mr. Speaker. But we saw last summer how their response to the wildfires was dangerously inept. People lost their homes. People lost their whole communities, and now they're at risk again.

What lessons has that minister learned from the Sask Party's failures last summer? And how will he ensure that he doesn't fail once again with the risk of floods?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. Michael Weger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency is currently responding to support requests from the rural municipality of Meadow Lake, Mr. Speaker. They have already taken action, Mr. Speaker. The agency is supporting efforts for this flood response with over 40,000 sandbags, two sandbagger machines, several pumps and hoses, and we have type 1 and type 2 crew members dispatched. We're also in communication with other communities such as Foam Lake, Pierceland that are also concerned about potential flooding, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Future of Information Services Corporation

Aleana Young: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Sask Party government introduced their bill on ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan]. And this matters to everyone in Saskatchewan who owns a business, wants to buy a house, a business, or a farm because, thanks to the Sask Party government, that is about to get more expensive. And that's because that minister is breaking a promise made by this government to the Saskatchewan people back in 2012.

Now this bill would lift the cap that prevents any one shareholder from acquiring more than 15 per cent of the shares. How is it in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan to make them a minority shareholder in ISC?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan].

Hon. Jeremy Harrison: — Well thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We own 29 per cent of the shares, which I think means we're already a minority shareholder in ISC, Mr. Speaker.

But what we did yesterday is introduce amendments to the ISC Act that will further strengthen the protections for the golden share. Mr. Speaker. That will include the head office being located here in Saskatchewan into the long term in that statute, Mr. Speaker. It also includes making sure that the intellectual property that ISC owns will be domiciled, meaning will be located here in this province by law into the future as well, Mr. Speaker.

It also legislates the contract, the master services agreement with ISC into the long term, that's being protected in statute as well, Mr. Speaker. We're making sure that the interests of this province and the interests of our public are being protected.

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

Access to Addictions Treatment

Betty Nippi-Albright: — Mr. Speaker, the drug crisis in Saskatchewan continues to spiral out of control. We're seeing it across the province, rural and urban. Yesterday, the Minister of Health had to send out another overdose alert. This time it was here in the city of Regina. I'm going to read a quote:

Regina Fire and Protective Services and the Nēwo-Yōtina Friendship Centre have reported an elevated and increasing number of overdoses since April 1st, 2026, many of which required multiple doses of naloxone. Between April 1st and April 21st, 2026 there have been 140 overdose-related calls.

[11:00]

140 calls in three weeks, Mr. Speaker. That does not include the ones that are not reported. This can't go on, Mr. Speaker. Where is the plan from this government to get this crisis under control and keep people from losing their lives?

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

Hon. Lori Carr: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan, and it's called the action plan for mental health and addictions, Mr. Speaker. And we take this subject very, very seriously.

Within that plan, Mr. Speaker, we have seen successes. Since that plan was introduced, Mr. Speaker, there has been a 28 per cent decrease in overdose deaths in this province. So while we want to see zero deaths — and that's the whole point of this — we want to get individuals into recovery, into some of those recovery spaces that we're opening across this province. We already had 500. We've added 312, and we're going to get to that additional 188 beds to make that 500 extra beds, Mr. Speaker. We're going to try to get people into recovery, Mr. Speaker, and that's the goal here.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on the Economy.

Standing Committee on the Economy

Daryl Harrison: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 24, *The Saskatchewan Internal Trade Promotion Act* without amendment.

Speaker Goudy: — When shall this bill be considered in the Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export.

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill be now read the third time.

Speaker Goudy: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in the Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 24, *The Saskatchewan Internal Trade Promotion Act* and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 24 — *The Saskatchewan Internal Trade Promotion Act*

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — I move that the bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the minister that the bill be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

Speaker Goudy: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Blaine McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 33, *The Credit Union Amendment Act, 2025* without amendment.

Speaker Goudy: — When shall this bill be considered in the Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill be now read a third time.

Speaker Goudy: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in the Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 33, *The Credit Union Amendment Act, 2025* and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 33 — *The Credit Union Amendment Act, 2025*

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the minister that the

bill be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

Speaker Goudy: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Blaine McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 47, *The Response to Illicit Drugs Act* without amendment.

Speaker Goudy: — When shall this bill be considered in the Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill be now read a third time.

Speaker Goudy: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in the Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 47, *The Response to Illicit Drugs Act* and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 47 — *The Response to Illicit Drugs Act*

Hon. Tim McLeod: — I move that the bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the minister that the bill be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

Speaker Goudy: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Blaine McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 45, *The Co-operatives Consequential Amendments Act, 2025* without amendment.

Speaker Goudy: — When shall this bill be considered in the Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill be now read a third time.

Speaker Goudy: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in the Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 45, *The Co-operatives Consequential Amendments Act, 2025* and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — The minister may now proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 45 — *The Co-operatives Consequential Amendments Act, 2025*

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the minister that the bill be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

Speaker Goudy: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing

Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

**Standing Committee
on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice**

Blaine McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 44, *The Co-operatives Act, 2025*, a bilingual bill, without amendment.

Speaker Goudy: — When shall this bill be considered in the Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill be now read a third time.

Speaker Goudy: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in the Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 44, *The Co-operatives Act, 2025* and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

**Bill No. 44 — *The Co-operatives Act, 2025*
*Loi de 2025 sur les coopératives***

Hon. Tim McLeod: — I move that the bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the minister that the bill be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

Speaker Goudy: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

**PRESENTING REPORTS
BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

**Standing Committee
on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice**

Blaine McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present its third

report for the thirtieth legislature, which includes the 2026-27 estimates and the 2025-26 supplementary estimates no. 2. I move:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice for the thirtieth legislature be now concurred in.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the Chair:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice for the thirtieth legislature be now concurred in.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

Speaker Goudy: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

MOTIONS

**Consideration of Bill No. 606
in Committee of the Whole on Bills**

Jared Clarke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding *Orders of the Day*, I seek leave to move the following motion:

That the Assembly immediately proceed to private members' public bills and orders, Committee of the Whole on Bills to consider Bill No. 606, *The Provincial Health Authority (ER Closure right-to-know) Amendment Act*.

Speaker Goudy: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — No.

Speaker Goudy: — Leave has not been granted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Actions to Provide Cost-of-Living Relief

Darcy Warrington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be on my feet for the second time for the 75-minute debate. It'll be a combination of previously written notes and different experiences that I've come to be a part of over the last year. So thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to discuss solutions for the all-too-common cost-of-living pressures in Saskatchewan.

And I want to start off by acknowledging the steadfastness of the Premier and the members opposite. The amount of willpower it takes to say no so consistently when presented with reasonable, responsible ideas to address the affordability crisis every day in this House is admirable. The hard-working people of this province are struggling more and more each day as costs rise, and the government sits idly on its hands claiming they've had discussions with the federal government, blaming geopolitical conditions outside their control on a regular basis, and more or less suggesting there's nothing they can do despite having the authority to do so much.

Our caucus has presented common-sense solutions to issues like rising fuel and grocery prices, yet this government has shown that they value their own willpower over the well-being of the people of this province.

Wait a minute. Earlier I mistakenly said "admirable" when describing the Premier's willpower on ignoring solutions. Let's talk about some of the recent proposals — I meant "reckless," by the way; my apologies — put forward by the Saskatchewan NDP. We have some much better ideas. Let's see if we can find the word that I'm looking for.

Predatory AI pricing. Yes, let's start with our focus on banning those by retailers. There is only one side of this House interested in legislating against this exploitive practice, Mr. Speaker. AI pricing serves no purpose of value other than to rip off customers to the fullest extent possible in order to pad corporate bottom lines.

When my colleague from Saskatoon Southeast introduced her Bill 619, *The Consumer Protection and Business Practices (Banning Unfair A.I. Pricing) Amendment Act*, we hoped the government would find common ground and realize the obvious need to add a layer of consumer protection to this province to combat this atrocious practice. What good does AI pricing bring to the people of this province? Are they excited that grocery corporations can use algorithms to maximize the amount of money they take from their customers? It's not fair. It's not innovative. It's exploitive and predatory. To be honest it's a bit dystopian.

We need to get ahead of this, Mr. Speaker, before it gets worse. Grocery corporations are already squeezing water from a stone when it comes to increased prices for a consumer base already struggling to make ends meet. When we call for regulations that will force these corporations to loosen the grip even just a bit, the Sask Party simply implores them to squeeze harder. After nearly two decades in power, the people of this province are sick of being squeezed for everything they have because the Sask Party government would rather please the shareholders of these corporations and ignore the effect it has on the people . . .

Speaker Goudy: — There's been a few comments . . . You have to be very cautious in saying what you believe is the intention of the government. So just moving forwards, please keep that in mind.

Darcy Warrington: — The Sask Party government seems to have less interest in helping the people of the province and allowing corporations to ignore the shareholders. We are seeing similar bills to 619 being looked at in other provinces, provinces

where the party in charge shows more leadership about lessening the everyday strain of rising costs. It is a shame that the people of this province might have to wait another two and a half years to get that same respect.

And fuel prices are skyrocketing, Mr. Speaker. The Premier knows this. The other side knows this. During an already tough affordability crisis, the last thing the people of this province needed was massive increases to fuel costs. Fluctuations like this are not necessarily normal, Mr. Speaker, and the circumstances of this price hike require an appropriate response from government in Saskatchewan to protect the working people of this province.

[11:15]

What has the Premier done to lower these prices? We saw the federal government do something. It immediately lowered costs by 10 cents a litre. It cost me over \$140 to fill up my truck on Monday after the reduction of 10 cents a litre by the feds. My colleague from Regina Mount Royal recently introduced a bill to temporarily suspend the fuel tax, which would have reduced gas prices by another 15 cents a litre, an extremely common-sense solution to an immediate and unexpected problem.

We all know what happened next. It was shot down immediately by this government. People like me could have saved around \$13 on their last fill. Over time that adds up. This move could have saved families in rural Saskatchewan \$750 a year, and \$600 a year for the people in urban Saskatchewan.

And if people want to say, well, how would we continue to invest in roads? What about those? The oil revenues, roughly every dollar that a barrel of oil goes up is \$20 million for the province of Saskatchewan. If, heaven forbid, this continues on for an entire year, that would be an extra . . . At current prices budgeted by this government at \$59 a barrel or so, and the roughly \$85 now, we'd be looking at over \$500 million extra.

That would allow for those investments in capital projects and the maintenance of highways. It would allow for an increase to the measly 0.3 per cent in the health care budget — \$27 million in a \$9 billion budget — for their patients-first plan. Hard to believe that when it's a 0.3 per cent increase year over year. We would also be able to remove that with a little bit to take down the deficit, maybe to avoid future use of special warrants as this government does for hundreds of million of dollars, year after year after year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my wife and I can shoulder these extra costs on groceries and fuel. But I've got some news for the folks on the other side of the aisle that have been around for a while: most of our constituents cannot handle that added cost. The Saskatchewan NDP opposition will always side with the working class of Saskatchewan and fight to make these things easier for them, not harder. The suspension of the fuel tax will provide that necessary relief. Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures.

Now I'd like to talk about the Leader of the Opposition's Bill 620 for a moment. She's put forward a common-sense piece of legislation that costs no money, that increases competition in the environment to allow more businesses to try and open additional

grocery stores, and remove advantages that some large grocery store companies have in terms of radius around where they open up shop.

So without using the names of these businesses, if grocery store A opens a grocery store on, say, Clarence and 8th in Saskatoon, even if they closed their doors within a few years, their lease agreement might prevent an additional store from opening up in that area. We need to be proactive to make sure that future grocery store locations can go into these positions.

If they can't be present, then groceries across the province that have multiple locations will continue to take advantage of people when it comes to the pricing on their products in their stores. They won't have the competition in those situations, and we need to altogether remove the ability for grocery stores to put those lease agreements in place. It's not good for the people of Saskatchewan, and it's common sense. I'm surprised that the other side didn't immediately support it.

Now I said at the beginning of my time that I was looking for a word to describe the government's willingness to stay the course while the costs for people of this province rise in the midst of an affordability crisis. I've come to a conclusion, Mr. Speaker. To so consistently dismiss reasonable, effective, and timely proposals that are brought forward from this side of the House is nothing less than inexcusable.

The refusal to substantively address concerns is just another point in the list of reasons why this province has fallen to the bottom of the heap nationally in so many metrics under this government. I might have some grace to extend to the other side if this was the first time, Mr. Speaker, but they've been in power for two decades. They should know better.

The worst thing about this entire situation is the response from this government was expected. We have come to expect them to refuse to listen to common-sense solutions. We have come to expect them to ignore the problems facing working people of this province. We've come to expect them to pay lip service to the . . . My apologies. That's not parliamentary language. Let me refrain. We have come to expect them to ignore the struggles of everyday people, and they consistently . . . You like that, Mr. Speaker? I like that, okay. I'll do your job for you sometimes. And they consistently diminish the cost-of-living situation, claiming they chose to offer relief in other ways.

But economic situations change things, Mr. Speaker. Cost-of-living pressures are dynamic. They require a reaction from time to time. You can't plan for a war in Iran and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Even this government could be given some grace for not knowing that that was going to happen, but they need to react to what everyone's feeling in their wallets.

Cost-of-living pressures are dynamic, as I said. Saying you've done something to accommodate the people of Saskatchewan, while disregarding the extra 50 cents a litre or so people have been paying recently, Mr. Speaker, is careless and unresponsive. So the Premier and his caucus have so many reasons to support these proposed bills and ideas, Mr. Speaker, but they're doing nothing if not consistently disappointing the people of this province.

As I get closer to my time I want to share one short anecdote. My son and I . . . For the last five years, my wife orders our groceries online and we go get them delivered to us. And it's kind of a fun time for me and my son. Every 8 a.m. on Sunday we drive to the grocery store and we play "Name That Tune" in the vehicle on Spotify. He really enjoys that. Sometimes if he's lucky, we'll walk in and take a look at the Lego in one of the adjacent businesses. But that being said, Mr. Speaker, my wife and I have used that service for seven years.

When we use apps on our phones, whether it's members' rewards programs that almost any grocery store has, they know our tendencies. They know the things that we're doing on a regular basis. So if I'm not looking — and I'll admit, I'm not looking very closely; my wife looks a little bit more closely at our grocery order week after week — they know what we're going to purchase. They have that information. And there is evidence, mounds of it, that supports that that data that we're giving, thinking that we are getting a deal, is in fact hurting us more than we know.

And we have the opportunity to do something here to make sure that our tendencies in grocery stores aren't being used against us. And not only should we be supporting legislation put forward by the member from Regina Mount Royal, the Leader of the Opposition; we also need to be taking a good, hard look at Bill 619 from the member from Saskatoon Southeast.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I'll read the motion:

That the Assembly calls upon the government to take immediate action to provide cost-of-living relief to lower food costs for Saskatchewan people by temporarily cutting the fuel tax on gasoline and diesel, by banning unfair AI pricing by retailers, by removing barriers that restrict competition between grocery store operators, and taking the PST off of food.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Stonebridge:

That the Assembly calls upon the government to take immediate action to provide cost-of-living relief to lower food costs for Saskatchewan people by (a) temporarily cutting the fuel tax on gasoline and diesel, (b) banning unfair AI pricing by retailers, (c) removing barriers that restrict competition between grocery store operators, and (d) taking the PST off of food.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Colleen Young: — Mr. Speaker, almost every day our Premier and Deputy Premier have stood up in this Assembly and shared with the people of this province the work that our government has done to help and support individuals and families with affordability measures.

Myself and all of my fellow colleagues have spent time listening to constituents and provided feedback that has given us the direction that has helped guide the decisions our government has

made to put in place affordability measures that support and protect the people of Saskatchewan. We've enacted policies that aren't just one-offs or temporary measures, but that support individuals, families, students, businesses, industries, institutions, and everyone who calls Saskatchewan home.

Mr. Speaker, since 2007 we have continuously made changes to the indexation of the personal income tax, saving taxpayers a total of 489 million, allowing Saskatchewan residents to keep more money in their pockets. And I'll repeat, Mr. Speaker, the most notable words to repeat: Saskatchewan — Saskatchewan — has among the lowest personal taxes in the country.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, it is income tax season right now, and many individuals are preparing their tax returns before the end of the month. Commitments made in *The Saskatchewan Affordability Act* that were implemented a year ago are helping more people pay less in personal income tax and keep more money in their pockets.

And as has been said many times in this Assembly, a family of four living in this province pays no provincial personal income tax on their first \$65,000 of combined income, the highest tax-free threshold in all of Canada, which, under the NDP, that same family paid provincial income tax once their combined income reached just \$26,150. And, Mr. Speaker, a family of four with \$100,000 in total income pays 4,484 less in personal income tax today compared to what they paid under the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, taxation changes alone in this year's budget provide 200 million in tax savings, and there is \$2.5 billion in annual affordability measures in this year's budget — a budget which the opposition voted against — measures that ensure that Saskatchewan remains the most affordable place in Canada to live, work, raise a family, and start a business.

Mr. Speaker, the personal, spousal, equivalent to spousal, and child tax exemptions, as well as the seniors' supplement will increase by \$500 each again this year. And the Saskatchewan low-income tax credit will be increased by another 5 per cent, all over and above annual indexation, providing significant affordability relief for everyone in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, making changes to the personal income tax is the most fair, equitable, and permanent policy for all citizens of this province, and help goes exactly where it is needed.

Affordability isn't just about reducing taxes for individuals, but it's also important for our small businesses across this province. And that is why we chose to provide ongoing support for Saskatchewan businesses by keeping the small-business tax rate at 1 per cent, saving over 35,000 small businesses in this province \$50 million annually in taxes that they can choose how they want to reinvest in the economy.

Mr. Speaker, our affordability measures are supporting and helping the most vulnerable community members. Saskatchewan income support clients will receive a \$1,000 one-time-per-household utility arrears payment. SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] client benefits will increase by 10 per cent for the next three years.

And by negotiating a good multi-year funding agreement with our post-secondary institutions, which includes capping tuition at

3 per cent, we are supporting and helping our future generations. Increasing the graduate retention tax credit program from \$20,000 to \$24,000, that provides a tuition rebate in the form of non-refundable tax credits, helps students who live and work in Saskatchewan after they graduate. And combine this with the changes to the personal income tax; they may not have to pay any income tax at all for a few years as they advance in their careers.

[11:30]

Making children's activities more affordable is key to providing more equitable access and promoting youth and health and wellness. And that is why we have doubled the active families benefit, going from \$150 to \$300 per child. The eligible family income threshold will also be doubled from \$60,000 to \$120,000 to allow more families to claim the benefit. For a child with a disability, the benefit doubles from \$200 to \$400.

Mr. Speaker, that's not all the affordability measures this government is providing to the residents of Saskatchewan. *The Saskatchewan Affordability Act* fulfilled many more commitments to keep life more affordable. We increased the first-time homebuyers tax credit. We brought back the home renovation tax credit. We introduced the fertility treatment tax credit. We increased the disability and caregivers tax credits. We increased the personal care home benefits for seniors. And now we have introduced the volunteer first responders tax credit.

Mr. Speaker, these are not one-time savings. These are ongoing savings that save families money every year, year after year. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the most valuable and important affordability measures which affects all residents across the province: we removed the federal carbon tax off of all SaskPower customer bills.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP opposition leader has been asking the government to remove the fuel tax in this province as a temporary affordability measure. I know that residents in my constituency are very grateful for the improvements that have been made and are being made on the highways in their constituency. It allows them to travel safely back and forth to work, and to visit family and friends.

You know what, Mr. Speaker, it's that gas tax that has allowed this government since 2008 to invest \$14.8 billion into our province's transportation infrastructure, improving 22 700 kilometres of highways, along with bridges, culverts, and airports. These are not temporary measures; they're permanent ones.

Mr. Speaker, I believe strengthening and growing a province's economy can also be seen as an affordability measure too. With a growing population, job creation, expanding businesses, industries, and companies, and real large investments being made right here in Saskatchewan, all paying taxes, allows us to offer affordability options to our citizens. The strength of our economy means we can make life more affordable for Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, building relationships around the world, diversifying our trade markets, will allow this government to continue supporting and helping provide affordability measures to the people of this province.

Saskatchewan has strong consumer protection measures in place to guard against unfair business practices including prohibitions against misleading or deceiving consumers. The consumer protection division of the Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan has indicated there have been no reported complaints of surveillance pricing impacting consumers in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to working with our provincial, territorial, and federal counterparts to ensure there is consistency across Canada on consumer protection matters that would be addressed more effectively through a national approach and the potential involvement of the Competition Bureau of Canada. This is in stark contrast to the ineffective patchwork strategy proposed by the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, some of the members opposite say there's nothing to be proud of in Saskatchewan. Well on this side of the House, we don't believe it. There is so, so much to be proud of in Saskatchewan. I was born and raised in Saskatchewan. I raised my family here, and I continue to live in this great province. I am proud of the work our government has done to keep life more affordable for this province's citizens. We will keep listening. We will keep working with our businesses and industries, and we will continue to always, always protect the people of this great province. Thank you.

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

Brittney Senger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and join into the debate. When I talk to people in Saskatoon Southeast, one of the things that I hear the most frequently is how unaffordable everything has become. Whether it's groceries, gas, insurance, or power bills, things have skyrocketed, and frankly it's out of control. People cannot keep up. This is a cost-of-living crisis that we are in in Saskatchewan, and people are more anxious about their financial situations in Saskatchewan than anywhere else in the country. Yet the best this government can do to ease their anxiety is offer them a tax break once a year.

Mr. Speaker, our caucus and our leader, Carla Beck, are offering real solutions. We're looking for ways that we can ease the financial burden, and I'm happy to say that we have those options. Grocery prices are through the roof, so we've proposed that the government remove PST from pre-packaged foods like chicken, like salads, and other goods. Our leader introduced legislation to reduce grocery competition barriers, and I introduced Bill 619 to ban unfair algorithmic or AI pricing. These are actions that the government could immediately implement that would save people money and ease this horrible financial burden that they're facing.

Mr. Speaker, gas prices. We all know that they have skyrocketed due to war in the Middle East, and the federal government took action by suspending the fuel tax. And despite our countless calls for the provincial government to do the same, they have refused. It's almost funny that when it comes to gas, the government refuses to follow in the federal government's footsteps, but when it comes to technology, this government is so lost they won't do anything without the federal government.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Premier, we have called on him and we've

called on this government to take action on Bill 619 and ban AI pricing. When the Premier has spoken to it, he continues to refer to it as predatory pricing. Well the two are not the same. He's made no commitment to actually address AI pricing. Now I could condemn and I could heckle and I could shame him for using the wrong word, but rather than do that, I would much rather explain it to the government so that they know what they're talking about when it comes to cost of living. And you know what? No matter your age or your tech literacy skills, this way everyone will be able to understand it.

So predatory pricing, simply put, is when a supplier reduces the cost of a good, takes a brief financial hit, and they use it to drive other suppliers out of the market. Once their cost goes down and the other supplier is no longer in the market, they are able to jack up their price to make up for that loss. AI pricing is when companies track consumer data through information that is available or entered online through websites or through apps, and it's used to adjust prices.

So to give an example, as my colleague from Saskatoon Stonebridge did, I think we both wanted to make sure that everyone in the Assembly was very clear on what we are actually proposing. So let's say there are two businesses and, you know, they're one of these 14 grocery stores that are so close by and both stores sell only pre-made food. One business reduces the cost of its food and takes a financial hit. The other store does not reduce their prices and they can't keep up with the costs of the other store. So the store that can't reduce their prices goes out of business and the business that remains is able to jack up their prices to offset the earlier loss. That is predatory pricing.

Now in a similar situation there's two businesses again, again only selling pre-made food. And one store sells its products online and offers delivery. Customers have to create an account to place their order. They have to enter their delivery information, their billing information to make that purchase.

This data is used to estimate income levels; track spending habits and consumption patterns. With advanced software that this company is using, AI can incorporate that information and gather information from other websites to detect and compare prices that competing stores might charge and then it can incorporate this into their own pricing.

Now the second business is much larger. They've expanded to multiple locations and they have a loyalty program. Customers have to download an app to join the loyalty program and add a digital points card to their Apple Wallet. Each time the card is scanned, data is collected. The data can be things like what they purchased, their spending amount, which store they visited, and how often they're shopping at that store. This information is then used to adjust pricing strategies.

So as the business grows it adopts virtual labels, or digital shelf labelling as it's known. This technology allows staff to instantly — with just the click of a button — to update the prices on their shelves. These changes can be applied selectively in locations where customers tend to shop more frequently. This is AI pricing. AI pricing and predatory pricing can go hand in hand. But the main difference between the two is predatory pricing is monitored by the federal government because the federal government, through Canada's Competition Bureau and the

Competition Act, are responsible for monitoring the market versus *The Consumer Protection Act* which is the responsibility of the provincial government because the Government of Saskatchewan is responsible for protecting Saskatchewan from rising costs.

To be clear, we support a competitive market. However we want to find measures that we can take to make life more affordable now, not just at tax season.

So let me give another example. Imagine that almost everything from the last example is the same, except this time there actually are 14 grocery stores nearby. Many of them are selling pre-made food. Now it's not just two stores competing, it's many stores, so they have to keep their costs down. That saves consumers money.

Now if we get rid of data tracking, customers will pay less because their information is not being used to inflate prices. Other stores are no longer keeping track of their data and it will save people money. Let's take it a step further and remove PST, saving consumers again. And let's go even further and say that we suspend the gas tax. This saves customers money when they're driving to the store and it saves money for delivery drivers.

[11:45]

So that is what we are proposing. Mr. Speaker, we have solutions. We are proposing solutions. There is action that this government can take to make life more affordable. And we hope that they will finally agree to truly do what is in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan.

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

Blaine McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It really is a privilege to stand and speak in the House. And I wish I had more time because there's not going to be enough time to speak to every point that I want to focus on on what I see is the difference between our approach to affordability and members opposite.

What comes to mind in terms of what I saw in the motion is the overuse of the word "immediate" or "immediately." It may be the most overused word in this legislature. When I think of immediately, decisions that need to be made immediately, I think of getting out of the danger zone of a cow that's just had her calf. You've got to be careful on that one and an immediate decision is required. Using the word "immediate" in terms of developing policy implies that by just simply snapping our fingers, we can change the long-term outlook.

The 2024 general election was largely focused on the issue of affordability, and rightly so. Times are tough. That's acknowledged. But the people of Saskatchewan said, we like your approach. And they also asked us to do better, and we have responded with permanent, well-thought-out initiatives, not immediate temporary relief that doesn't last.

Policies that foster economic growth while maintaining strong financial management so we have the ability to continue to protect our citizens from the uncertainty that exists today, that's what we're focused on: uncertainty that changes ever so rapidly.

And, Mr. Speaker, our economic policies are working. While the rest of Canada is trying to maintain and save what they have, we are showing great growth and expansion.

Now continuing on the topic of affordability, we've done taxation changes in our budget which provide more than 200 million in savings this year. We have among the lowest provincial income taxes in the country. As was already said, a family of four pays \$4,500 less in personal income tax than under the members opposite when they were in power.

That family of four pays no provincial income tax on their first 65,000 of combined income. That is the highest tax-free threshold in Canada, something that we need to be proud of. And what was the tax-free threshold under members opposite? 26,150. Now that's, Mr. Speaker, a permanent measure of affordability, not temporary and not an immediate initiative. It's well planned and permanently in place and indexed to inflation.

Indexation needs to be unwrapped just a little bit. While NDP governments in BC [British Columbia] and Manitoba have quietly cancelled indexation, let's talk about the impact indexation has in our province. This year alone, for 2026 taxes, indexation will save taxpayers \$42 million. The combined effect of indexation from 2007 through 2026 is a savings of a total of almost \$500 million — 489 million in 2026.

On top of that, the personal, spousal, equivalent-to-spouse, and child tax exemptions, as well as seniors' supplement, will increase by \$500 each again this year. And the Saskatchewan low-income tax credit will be increased by another 5 per cent over and above annual indexation. That's important, Mr. Speaker. That's affordability relief for everyone in Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the very best answer to affordability is a good full-time job. It is a fact that Saskatchewan has the strongest rate of full-time job growth along with the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. It appears to me and to those that watch and report on these things — i.e. the bond rating facilities — that Saskatchewan is headed in the right direction regarding our gross domestic product. Sixty-two billion in investments this year means that many more good-paying jobs will continue to come.

So another aspect of the motion set before us today is talking about taking the PST off food. And I really focus on that word "food." It's a very curious change in language. It used to be "take the PST off all groceries" coming from the other side. Maybe our repetition of saying there is no PST on groceries, that is finally making headway on the other side. Mr. Speaker, groceries are what you turn into food. There is no PST on groceries. You change the words, Mr. Speaker, and you get the same result. There is no PST on groceries.

Let's talk about taking the fuel tax off on gasoline and diesel again immediately. And the word "temporary," interesting to say the least. Daily we have visitors in the House who watch and form their own opinions, which sometimes they do share with us. Yesterday the question came to me, do they — meaning members opposite — do they not know that if we don't pay our taxes, then our debt will only grow? Apparently not. Because they, in their last election campaign, had \$3 billion in unaccounted-for campaign promises. No way to pay for them.

Let's examine our highway budget: \$764 million. That's 850 kilometres of provincial highways that are scheduled for renewal this year. Our 10-year plan is to do 10 000 kilometres of highways. We are in year seven and have improved 7900 kilometres.

Now just a one-month temporary removal of the gas tax would amount to approximately \$40 million. So the question must be asked: what roads would you not fund for renewal or for rebuilding? What safety improvements would you not do? A one-time guest in the House gets it: money doesn't grow on trees.

Members opposite criticize for debt that we have and call for 3 billion in unfunded spending in their recent election campaign. That is very bad economics, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan are not fooled.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the story of a new Saskatchewan resident, a new resident that came to Saskatchewan because it was an affordable place to live — the story of Daina, recently . . . a job in the Moose Jaw care home that my aunt and uncle live in. In BC she was working two jobs as a nurse just to get by. Working in emergency department in two BC hospitals, barely able to keep up with the travel involved. Was trying to build a home base but finding that reality slipping by.

So she started an approach of researching what it would look like to live and work in Saskatchewan, and after a scouting trip based on online reviews led to the city of Moose Jaw, where she found friendly people, cab drivers that remembered her name, work only footsteps away, easy transition for car registration and affordable insurance, new driver's licence in less than a couple of days, health insurance and getting a Sask nursing licence in two days.

Warmly welcomed by the people of Moose Jaw, working only one job now that allows her to have the free time to actually have a life, an affordable lifestyle that allows her to live out her dreams — dreams for home ownership, family through fostering, involvement in community-based organization, and more. It was a move driven by a desire to find a more affordable, peaceful, and relaxed place to live.

Thank you for doing your exploratory research, Daina, and welcome to Saskatchewan. I trust that your story will encourage more people to follow your lead and find an affordable life in Saskatchewan.

What a difference from 20 years ago, when the only option to get ahead in life was to leave the province. We lost a generation in that process. The out-migration of talent was shocking. Thankfully we are now in a place where people can live out their dreams, find meaningful employment, and spread their wings as entrepreneurs, and know there is a government that will support them every step of the way.

May God bless Saskatchewan, the only home I have ever known and the place where I welcome anyone who wants to get a life.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the motion put forward by the opposite side.

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

Erika Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to stand in debate representing the people in my community and across this province who I am so proud of. I rise today to speak in support of this motion, a motion grounded in a simple but urgent reality: life has become too expensive for the people of Saskatchewan.

Across this province, families are making impossible choices. They are standing in grocery store aisles, putting items back on the shelf. They're stretching meals and skipping fresh fruit and worrying about how to make it to the end of the month. And this is not abstract; it's happening every day in our communities.

And while people are tightening their belts, food prices continue to climb. Over the past year alone food prices have risen significantly. But the real story is what families are seeing at the checkout. Staples like ground beef, cooking oil, and fresh produce have surged dramatically in price over the past decade.

And at the same time, food bank use is skyrocketing. Nearly 4 in 10 users are children — the highest rate in the country. But the Sask Party government in their infinite wisdom removed funding for food banks in this year's budget. And how can that be acceptable?

Mr. Speaker, this is not just an affordability issue; it is a moral issue. But increasingly it is something more. It is a question of economic resiliency and security. Recent analysis has made it clear that Canada is facing what experts call a food security gap: a growing vulnerability in our ability to ensure stable, affordable access to food.

Our food system depends on complex supply chains, transportation networks, and concentrated market power. When any part of that system is strained, whether by global shocks that we're experiencing right now, trade disruptions, or corporate concentration, it's families who pay the price. And that is exactly what we are seeing today.

So the question before us is not whether government should act; the question is whether it will act with urgency that this moment demands. And the motion that we've put forward is both practical, with immediate steps to provide real relief.

First, temporarily cutting the fuel tax on gasoline and diesel. Mr. Speaker, in a province like Saskatchewan, transportation is not optional; it is essential. Fuel costs are embedded in everything, especially food, and when it costs more to move goods, it costs more to buy them. A temporary fuel tax reduction would provide immediate relief not just at the pump but at the grocery store.

Second, banning unfair AI pricing practices. We are entering a new era where pricing can be adjusted in real time by algorithms, often in ways that lack transparency and accountability. Now families should not have to wonder whether the price that they are paying is fair or whether it has been optimized to extract maximum profit. That's just predatory. Markets only work when they are fair. And when technology is used to undermine fairness, it is our responsibility as legislators to step in.

[12:00]

Thirdly, removing barriers that restrict competition between grocery store operators. And this is where Bill 620 plays a critical role. Right now large grocery chains are using restrictive covenants and exclusivity clauses to block competitors from entering markets. And these are not just theoretical concerns. Investigations have shown that major grocery chains in Canada have used these tools to prevent their competitors — including small grocers, discount retailers, and even pharmacies — from operating nearby.

So this is about control — control over who can sell food, control over where they can sell it, and ultimately control over the prices people pay. Bill 620 would end these practices. It would restore competition, and with it choice and downward pressure on prices, because, Mr. Speaker, more competition does not just benefit the market, it benefits families.

And we know this approach works. Manitoba has already passed similar legislation. They're not sitting back on their laurels waiting to see what is coming down the pike next. No, they saw a problem and they acted. So why hasn't this government?

Finally, this motion calls for taking PST off food. Now, Mr. Speaker, food is not a luxury; it is a necessity. I think we can at least agree on that. Taxing it only adds to the burden families are already carrying. Removing the PST on food is a simple, direct way to provide relief.

But, Mr. Speaker, we must also recognize something deeper. Affordability is not just about prices today, it is about the strength and resilience of the system tomorrow. Experts are warning that Canada has underinvested in the middle of our food system — processing, storage, and distribution — and that is leaving us vulnerable to disruption. We rely heavily on external inputs, global supply chains, and concentrated corporate power, and that makes us fragile. And when systems are fragile, prices are volatile.

And this is why food security must be treated as more than a social issue. It must be treated as a core economic priority and yes, even a matter of national resilience, because a country that cannot ensure affordable access to food is a country and a province that is exposed. It means being exposed to global shocks, exposed to market manipulation, and exposed to rising inequality.

And, Mr. Speaker, we are already seeing the consequences. Food insecurity is rising across the country. Millions of Canadians are struggling to afford the basics, and the problem is not going away on its own. And here's the hard truth. Charity alone cannot solve it. Food banks alone cannot solve it.

Only policy can solve this. And that is why this motion matters. It combines immediate relief with structural change. It lowers costs directly through fuel tax relief and removing PST, it ensures fairness by addressing AI pricing, and it strengthens the system by increasing competition in the grocery sector.

This is what using every tool at our disposal looks like. Because right now families are asking a simple question: where is the government? Families are doing everything right. They are

working hard, budgeting carefully, and making sacrifices. They are not asking for handouts; they're asking for fairness. They're asking for a government that is willing to stand up to powerful interests and act in the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, leadership is not about waiting, as we heard from the member from Lumsden-Morse. It is about acting. We cannot control every global factor affecting prices, but we can control how we respond. We can choose to lower costs where we have the authority, we can choose to ensure markets are fair and competitive, and we can choose to strengthen the resilience of our food system. Or we can choose to do nothing.

And this motion is about making the right choice because affordability is not theoretical. It is not optional. It is a daily reality for the people we represent. More competition means lower prices, fairer rules mean greater trust, and decisive action means real relief when people need it. And the people of Saskatchewan cannot afford to wait.

I urge all members of this Assembly to support this motion and take meaningful steps to make life more affordable and to build a food system that is not only cheaper but stronger, fairer, and more secure for the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Jamie Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we talk about affordability in Canada today, we are really talking about something deeper than numbers. We are talking about opportunity, stability, and quality of life. And on that front, Saskatchewan stands tall.

Across this country families are feeling the pressure, yes. In provinces like British Columbia and Ontario, housing alone consumes the majority of the household income. In cities like Toronto and Vancouver, rent for the modest apartment can exceed \$2,500 a month. But here in Saskatchewan the story is different. Saskatchewan consistently ranks among the most affordable provinces in Canada, with a cost-of-living index significantly lower and below the national average.

That difference matters. It means a young family can afford their first home. It means seniors can retire with dignity. It means workers can keep more of what they earn. And it's not just about housing, Mr. Speaker. When you combine lower housing costs, competitive taxes, and the second-lowest utility bundle in the country, Saskatchewan ranks as one of the most affordable jurisdictions in the entire country for families and individuals alike. We continue to focus on the amazing things that Saskatchewan has to offer. And at a time when affordability is slipping away in many parts of Canada, Saskatchewan is holding the line.

Now no place is perfect. Groceries and transportation costs can vary, and affordability depends on individual circumstances. But when you look at the full picture which is housing, taxes, utilities, and overall cost of living, the advantage is clear. Saskatchewan offers something increasingly rare in Canada: a place where hard work still translates into a good life; a place where opportunity isn't crowded out by cost; a place where people can build a future, not just afford the present. So when we talk about

affordability, let's not only focus on the challenges. Let's also recognize the success. And Saskatchewan is a success story worth telling.

And I will not discount that right now many Canadians are feeling the strain. Rising costs from groceries and housing have made everyday life more difficult, and inflation has quietly reshaped what normal expenses look like. What used to be manageable now requires careful thought for some. And while inflation is driven by global forces, supply chains, energy prices, interest rates, there is something meaningful within our control. We may not be able to change the price of everything, but we can change how we navigate it. Intentional choices can help ease that pressure.

The Saskatchewan Party government has taken up that challenge and taken it head-on since 2008. Under Premier Brad Wall we increased basic personal and spousal exemptions in 2008. In 2011 a family of four didn't pay income tax on their first \$46,000. Small-business income tax thresholds were raised to \$600,000. In this budget a family of four that earns \$100,000 pays four thousand, four hundred and eighty-four thousand dollars less in income taxes.

We have provided \$2.5 billion in affordability measures. We have provided 2.5 billion, not to mention protecting our health care services. And what I mean by protecting, I mean standing up for what people have come to expect as well as even making it better — protecting our education services, building more schools, hiring more teachers and EAs [educational assistant], and expanding complex classroom supports.

And where am I going with this, Mr. Speaker? Well I want to assure Saskatchewan that we are working for them, that we have the people's best interests in the forefront at all times. This is a government that will continue to put people first and continue to work hard at providing the most we can to the people of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are moments in the nation's life when times are not always easy. Across our country people are working hard to keep up with inflation. And continuing political conflict being brought into our country has only increased stress levels. We have addressed concerns by bringing more investments into our province that will make Saskatchewan's economy the best in the nation. We stand for Saskatchewan people and want to achieve the best possible outcome for everyone.

We have faced challenges before and we have overcome them. And we will again and again and again, Mr. Speaker. Because of that strength, this country, this province has never come from government alone. It has always come from people, from determination, from work ethic, from willingness to adapt, to sacrifice, and keep moving forward even when the road is not easy.

Now that doesn't mean there isn't a role for leadership, because there is. And our government creates the conditions where people can succeed, with stable policies, reasonable taxes, and the freedom to grow. Prosperity doesn't come from control. It comes from confidence — confidence in individuals, confidence in families, and confidence in communities to make the right decisions for themselves.

When people are given room to breathe, to build, to innovate, and to keep more of what they earn, they don't just survive tough times; they overcome them. So yes, there are challenging days, but they are not permanent days. And if we stay focused on common sense, on responsibility, and on trusting people, we will not only get through this, but we will come out stronger.

May we never lose faith in the resilience of people who make this country and this province great. Because there are going to be moments. And there's going to be moments out there and in life when things don't go according to plan, when the weight feels heavier than what you've expected, and when the path ahead isn't clear. That's when faith matters most, Mr. Speaker, because anyone can stand tall when things are easy. But it takes discipline — real discipline — to keep moving forward when you're tired, when you're uncertain, when quitting starts to sound reasonable.

Well out here in Saskatchewan, we do not quit. We adjust. We push. We rely on the person beside us and we make sure that they can rely on us. You do not need perfect conditions to succeed. You need commitment. You need grit. And you need the belief that no matter how tough it gets, your government is tougher. Because, Mr. Speaker, we are.

I will not be supporting the motion put forward by the member opposite. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Darcy Warrington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member from Martensville-Blairmore: most of the contents of a child's lunch kit are subject to PST. I know. I saw their lunches for 17 years. Could you speak to the amount of food in your constituents' kids' lunch kits that is subject to PST?

[12:15]

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Martensville-Blairmore.

Hon. Jamie Martens: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, consistent negativity often becomes a habit. And negativity is learned over time. I choose to continue being optimistic. And how frustrating it must be, Mr. Speaker, because I understand the opposition's role. But on the other hand, I am optimistic that someday they may be in favour of something that we do.

And since one of the members in the debate has said that for the last seven years he's ordered groceries online, but yet he's still concerned about the predatory pricing. I'm wondering how that fares.

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

James Thorsteinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member from Saskatoon Southeast: do you believe that permanent affordability measures, like removing thousands of people from the provincial income tax roll, are best for the people of Saskatchewan? Or do you believe in temporary, short-term tax

measures?

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

Brittney Senger: — I believe that there are a number of measures that the government needs to be taking, and what they are doing is not enough to protect the people of Saskatchewan and make life more affordable. We need to do something now to take immediate relief, not just at tax season.

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

Erika Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the member for Lumsden-Morse think it's acceptable that, at a time of skyrocketing food bank usage and child hunger, that funding for food banks was cut from the provincial budget?

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

Blaine McLeod: — Thank you for the question, and I appreciate being on my feet to answer it. Just first of all, we just need to correct. It wasn't a cut to funding. It was a two-year program that ran its course during a time of outrageous inflationary increases that were over 6 per cent.

What we've done for affordability in the province is provide long-term predictable tax breaks for families. And a family of four has the lowest cost of living anywhere in Canada. We will be there for all of the people of Saskatchewan, and we'll continue with predictable tax breaks that they can count on year over year.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Carlton.

Kevin Kasun: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member from Saskatoon Stonebridge: why did you vote against this government's budget, with affordability measures like low-income tax credit, the disability tax credit, the caregiver tax credit, and the fertility treatment tax credit saving Saskatchewan families hundreds of millions this year alone?

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

Darcy Warrington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I voted against this budget because there was only \$27 million in it extra for health care, less per-student funding for the students of this province that deserve better, and no new affordability measures, which is what we're discussing here today.

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

Brittney Senger: — To the member from Martensville-Blairmore: would the average household in your constituency struggle to pay AI-inflated prices on their groceries?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Martensville-Blairmore.

Hon. Jamie Martens: — Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, rather than controlling every aspect of people's lives, like Avi Lewis's NDP, we choose to help Saskatchewan people keep more money in their pockets. Our income tax credits as well as active families benefits and much more, as well as not putting PST on groceries, will keep food in the kids' lunch kits. Thank you.

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

James Thorsteinson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Former premier Lorne Calvert once told Saskatchewan residents they should go out and fill their own potholes. Does the member from Saskatoon Nutana believe that is still the NDP plan? For Saskatchewan communities currently see the provincial gas tax directly reinvested in their roads.

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

Erika Ritchie: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I won't take any questions or lessons from the members opposite when it comes to policies of a former government on this side of the House that had to respond to the highest debt that we've seen in Saskatchewan's history and saddled us with, you know, paying for your mistakes.

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

Darcy Warrington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To a majority of constituents in Martensville-Blairmore, do they use loyalty programs at your grocery stores? And does the member think it's okay that her constituents are being charged more for using those loyalty programs, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Martensville-Blairmore.

Hon. Jamie Martens: — Yes. Thank you so much. I truly appreciate, I truly appreciate the question. The NDP continue to follow Manitoba's lead by wanting to remove the PST that is sold on snacks, Mr. Speaker. They're misleading the public by suggesting that PST is applied to essential grocery items. And I noticed that the wording was just changed. And the essential grocery items are such things as meat, eggs, and milk, and vegetables. NDP Manitoba has also the highest rate of inflation in Canada. Why is nobody, why can nobody be taking this NDP seriously?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Carlton.

Kevin Kasun: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under this government a family pays zero provincial income tax on the first \$65,000 of combined income, the highest threshold in Canada. Under the NDP the same family would start paying income tax at \$26,000. To the member from Saskatoon Nutana: which of these is better to help support families in this province?

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

Erika Ritchie: — Twenty-seven per cent of children live in poverty. So we're looking for affordability measures. And the motion that's before the House today will address the urgent need to give money back to families so they can feed their families and their children.

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

Brittney Senger: — To the member from Martensville-Blairmore: can you name a single new cost-of-living relief measure that is in this year's bad-news budget?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Martensville-Blairmore.

Hon. Jamie Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I absolutely can name quite a few, but I only have a certain amount of time. So at this time I can name many. I can name the \$4,500 that is off income tax. I can name that the child active families benefit is now doubled to \$300 rather than \$150. I can name so much more, but we would be here all afternoon. Thank you.

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

James Thorsteinson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to the member from Saskatoon Nutana: what benefits a low-income family more, paying no provincial income tax or not paying provincial fuel tax?

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

Erika Ritchie: — You know, this isn't an either-or situation. Families need relief now. They need it in the form of fuel tax relief.

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

Darcy Warrington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm curious. To the member of Martensville-Blairmore and her constituents: do they enjoy classic, delicious rotisserie chickens from the north Costco in Saskatoon, or do they not consider that to be food?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Martensville-Blairmore.

Hon. Jamie Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, for one, absolutely love rotisserie chicken. Thank you so much. And not just from Costco but also from Co-op, the grocery store in my town. But if the NDP were serious about affordability, why didn't they vote for our budget?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Carlton.

Kevin Kasun: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member from Saskatoon Southeast: do you . . .

Speaker Goudy: — The 75-minute debate period has expired. And I just want to make one comment. It was a great job, but the

member from Martensville-Blairmore did say that the opposition had misled the public. It's possibly a debatable statement, but I think just the way that it was said sounded intentional. I'd ask you to apologize and withdraw that.

Hon. Jamie Martens: — I withdraw and apologize.

Speaker Goudy: — Thank you.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

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

Motion No. 2 — Support for the Patients-First Health Care Plan

Terri Bromm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the end of my remarks I will move the following motion:

That this Assembly supports the Government of Saskatchewan's recovery-oriented system of care and the patients-first health care plan to protect our most vulnerable residents.

Mr. Speaker, I am passionate about health care. I worked as a pharmacist in many capacities for 25 years providing care for many people, including vulnerable people. Our government will continue to invest in, support, and improve access to services and programs that protect our most vulnerable residents.

People can be classified as vulnerable in many ways. And I want to first discuss access to health care and then Government of Saskatchewan's recovery-oriented system of care. We are focused on improved access to health care by investing in the patients-first health care plan. We have this year a record investment in the Saskatchewan health care system: \$8.5 billion.

Mr. Speaker, the new patients-first health care plan outlines over 50 steps, including increasing the number and expanding the scope of practice for all health care professionals; expanding access to primary care and virtual care; increasing the number and access to urgent care centres throughout the province; continuing to recruit, train, and increase the number of doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses, and other health care providers, strengthening our health care work force. Strengthening the health care workforce is the foundation of Saskatchewan's patients-first approach, because every investment in infrastructure, technology, and innovation depends on having skilled professionals who deliver that care.

There are many steps included in the area of improving recruitment, retention, and training of these health care providers. We are streamlining recruitment by strengthening the mandate of the Saskatchewan health recruitment agency. We are expanding the rural physician incentive program, and we are maintaining and expanding the rural and remote recruitment incentive. Also we are adding 20 more medical school seats at the University of Saskatchewan College of Medicine, now 128 in total.

We are also expanding rural training opportunities by adding new rural family medicine training seats. In partnership with the College of Medicine, five training seats were added for 2026

where medical residents can complete their two-year family medicine residency. Two are in Nipawin, two in Melfort, and one in Yorkton. This will expand patient care in our rural communities.

I can share that all of the new rural family medicine seats are filled for this summer. I'm excited for this opportunity to have these doctors stay and practise here in rural Saskatchewan when their training is complete. In total we added 10 more medical residency seats and we will have 160 medical seats in total.

Twenty-six more nurse practitioner training seats have also been added, increasing the training capacity by 45 per cent. The government's investment in health care will improve access to care across the province. We will see thousands more Saskatchewan patients connected with a primary care provider through the largest nurse care provider expansion in provincial history. These steps to expand access to primary care include having an unlimited number of nurse practitioner contracts, and supporting nurse practitioners to hire allied health professionals for nurse practitioner-led primary care teams.

We are working to deliver more consistent relationship-based care by investing in education, training, retention, and recruitment of our primary care providers. Our investment will enhance emergency and critical care, support seniors, invest in mental health and addiction initiatives, and modernize facilities and the technology in those facilities.

[12:30]

Mr. Speaker, there is substantial funding to increase support pediatric enhancements across Saskatchewan to ensure safe, sustainable care for critically ill and premature infants and children requiring specialized services. We will expand neonatal intensive care capacity at Regina General Hospital and provide permanent funding to support NICU [neonatal intensive care unit] nursing positions that were previously added at Regina General Hospital.

Also there are further supports to permanently staff six pediatric in-patient beds at the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital. The provincial genetics and metabolics program will provide critical diagnostic and treatment pathways for individuals and families affected by complex or rare health conditions. This funding is separate from the investments made in the pediatric space.

Investment increases will fully fund resources added to last year to address sexually transmitted blood-borne infections in the province. Funding will focus on prevention, testing, diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing care. This funding will increase program staffing capacity and support expansion for the prenatal outreach and resource team, PORT, in North Battleford. Members may be aware of the PORT team run by an organization called Sanctum and the good work they have done in other communities in our province.

Mr. Speaker, funding supports continued work to develop more urgent care centres across our province located in Moose Jaw, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Regina, and Saskatoon. These plans are supporting second urgent care centres in each Regina and Saskatoon.

Saskatoon's first urgent care centre, a partnership with Ahtahkakoop Cree Developments, is expected to open in early 2027. It will have a dedicated patient entrance for those with mental health and addiction concerns. The urgent care centre operating in Regina has cared for over 65,000 patients so far, more than 100 patients each day on average, taking pressure off emergency departments.

Additional investments will continue addressing capacity for Saskatoon hospitals, with 60 new permanent acute in-patient beds between Royal University Hospital and St. Paul's Hospital. These investments will result in faster admissions, reduced delays, and enhanced care for critically ill patients.

Mr. Speaker, another part of our patients-first health care plan includes implementation of virtual primary care and remote monitoring tools. Also we will, through integrated virtual and in-person care networks, improve patient navigation. We will also expand the virtual physician program which now supports 30 rural hospitals and has helped avoid more than 5,200 potential emergency room disruptions.

Saskatchewan will invest \$9.2 million to better protect and improve quality of life for seniors and individuals needing complex care through practical approaches that provide options and supports to remain safely in their homes and communities. Key investments include new funding to support long-term care services for seniors and other long-term care residents; increased funding to strengthen home care services across the province, supporting independence for more seniors and individuals with chronic illness or disabilities to remain safely at home and better connected with their community; and finally, a funding increase to better support community-based programs for individuals with complex needs or disabilities.

These funding increases include targeted investments in the rural and remote memory clinic community-based dementia program and the Autism Resource Centre, or ARC, summer program. Our investments, Mr. Speaker, will continue to support people across this province, including residential services and day programming.

Targeted funding is being provided to support the following outcomes: an additional \$11.8 million will provide increased services to new and existing clients with intellectual disabilities and increase the level of support for clients with changing needs; an additional \$7 million will support the growing number of families accessing the autism spectrum disorder individualized funding program; \$11 million in capital investments will support the continued development of 10 new group homes and a new group home in Saskatoon for clients with disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and higher medical support needs.

We will continue momentum in health infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, with the new modern builds and facility upgrades across the province, including hospitals and facilities, long-term care homes, and urgent care centres, as well as software and equipment upgrades. Funding includes ongoing construction of the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital acute care tower; construction of a new specialized bed, long-term care facility in Regina; starting construction on the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency Saskatoon patient lodge; and completion of the Saskatoon urgent care centre among others.

Mr. Speaker, funding has been budgeted for 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 adds more trustee services to support individuals transitioning to supportive housing.

More funding will be provided for individuals experiencing interpersonal violence through programs and services, including second-stage housing that enhance victim services, broaden housing supports, raise awareness of human trafficking, and improve access to legal and court-based resources.

For people facing mental health and addiction challenges, the government is expanding access to mental health and addiction services. We are investing a record \$674 million into the mental health and addiction services across this province. Mental health and addiction challenges continue to have significant impact on individuals, families, and communities across our province with increasing pressure on emergency responders, health care providers, and community supports. These challenges require a coordinated, compassionate, and patient-oriented response across our entire system of care.

Every life lost to substance use is a tragedy. Our government remains deeply committed to providing available resources for individuals struggling with addictions. Our action plan for mental health and addictions focuses on building capacity for treatment, improving the system itself, and transitioning to a recovery-oriented system of care. We will continue to work towards this recovery-oriented system of care with our focus on treatment and recovery.

The focus is on having the right services and supports to help someone on their individual recovery journey. The transition to a recovery-oriented system of care is more than simply realigning services. It is a transformational shift where stakeholders and providers help an individual achieve and sustain recovery.

A recovery-oriented system of care is a coordinated network of person-centred, community-based services and supports that build on the strengths and resilience of individuals, families, and communities. It spans from early intervention to withdrawal management or detoxification and recovery treatment services. It recognizes that everyone's path to recovery is different, that some may need treatment for three months and others may need more time to reach a point where they are stable in their recovery. Successful recovery requires supports over the short, medium, and long term.

A recovery-oriented system of care moves away from episodic interventions towards longer ongoing care to achieve wellness of individuals, families, and communities. It breaks down silos and facilitates collaboration across sectors and with community-based services to help people achieve and maintain recovery.

Developing recovery capital is an important part of the recovery-oriented system of care model, a holistic approach that addresses the factors that impact an individual's path for recovery and improved well-being, such as physical and mental health; family, social, and leisure activities; housing and healthy environments; employment, vocational skills, and educational development; resolution of legal issues; and community integration and cultural support.

Mr. Speaker, we will invest over \$23 million more for targeted investments that will build treatment capacity, strengthen a recovery-oriented system of care, and improve access and navigation. More than 300 additional addiction treatments and recovery spaces are now operational across our province as we make progress to our additional 500-space commitment.

To do this we will add approximately 200 more addiction treatment and recovery spaces across multiple communities throughout Saskatchewan, resulting in a total of almost 800 addiction treatment and recovery spaces. Individuals in both urban and rural areas have improved access to treatment options closer to where they live. This helps reduce travel barriers and supports earlier intervention.

Of the 300 addiction spaces that have been announced so far, these include 60 treatment spaces through EHN Canada in Lumsden near Regina; 42 intensive virtual treatment spaces available to residents across the province; 41 treatment spaces at St. Joseph's Addiction & Recovery Centre in Estevan, including 26 post-treatment spaces and the recently announced 15 second-stage sober living treatment spaces; 40 mobile withdrawal management spaces with Medavie in Saskatoon; 32 intensive out-patient treatment spaces through Possibilities recover centre in Saskatoon, 12 of which are specifically for youth; 17 in-patient treatment spaces for families through Kamor Integrated Health in Saskatoon; 16 new second-stage sober living treatment spaces in Regina; 15 in-patient treatment spaces and five withdrawal management spaces at Thorpe Recovery Centre near Lloydminster; 15 withdrawal management spaces at Onion Lake; 15 in-patient treatment spaces at Muskwa Lake near Pinehouse; 14 in-patient treatment spaces through Poundmaker's Lodge in North Battleford; and six second-stage sober living spaces with Oxford House in Prince Albert.

There is also funding this year for a six-bed new youth detox unit at Calder Centre in Saskatoon. This will double the province's secure youth detox capacity. This expansion will significantly improve access for youth and families across our province. The site will follow a recovery-oriented approach that supports improved outcomes for young people.

We have allocated more than \$170 million for addictions services. This investment supports a full continuum of care, including expanded withdrawal management and in-patient treatment capacity; rapid access to addiction medicines clinics across the province; opioid agonist therapy, OAT, including virtual access through VAAM [virtual access to addiction medicine]; stronger pre- and post-treatment supports to help people sustain recovery.

The province will support the continued availability of adult rapid-access counselling services. Free walk-in mental health counselling without referral is provided, delivered both in person and virtually in more than 30 communities. This early intervention is critical in preventing more serious mental health challenges and reducing pressure on other parts of the health care system.

Another priority is improving how patients and families access or connect to care. A \$3 million investment will support continued development of the central intake and navigation system. This will also support expansion of the virtual access to

addiction medicine, or VAAM, program.

We are working to implement a central intake system that will streamline treatment access to those who need it. By adopting an “every door is the right door” approach within the addictions space, we can connect to more people reaching out for help. This will ensure that no matter where a person starts, they are guided to the right resources without being turned away or forced to reapply.

[12:45]

The province has launched virtual access to addiction medicine, VAAM, as an option for addiction treatment in January of this year. The initial phase of virtual access to medicine provided services to Nipawin, Lloydminster, and Cumberland House as well as clients in detox and recovery treatment centres in the province. It provides timely access to physicians, nurses, and counsellors who specialize in addiction medicine.

VAAM has expanded in the Northeast area to include Carrot River, Arborfield, Choceland, Tobin Lake, Cumberland House Cree Nation, Shoal Lake Cree Nation, and Red Earth Cree Nation. There are continued conversations with other First Nation communities for expansions during phase 2.

Virtual access to addiction medicine provides access to assessment, treatment, and ongoing support seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Through the supports, the program aims to help reduce substance use and dependence, prevent overdoses, and save lives.

Complex-needs facilities in North Battleford and Moose Jaw, which each provide up to 15 spaces, provide a medically supervised and secure place where police may bring an individual who is intoxicated and exhibiting behaviours that present a danger to themselves or others as an alternative to them being in police cells or in a hospital emergency department. Each facility is staffed with dedicated on-site health care professionals and security personnel who provide safe, timely support to individuals experiencing addiction or mental health crisis.

Individuals may be monitored for up to 24 hours and then are connected to appropriate services and long-term supports to promote treatment and recovery. These individuals are connected to services such as addiction treatment, mental health services, housing supports, income assistance, and community-based organizations.

Since opening these facilities, we have supported thousands of individuals in crisis and have had immeasurable impact on relieving pressure on the police services and emergency departments. Most individuals discharged from these facilities accept transportation to follow-up services. That matters, Mr. Speaker. It tells us that when people are treated with dignity at their most vulnerable moments, they are willing to engage in recovery. These facilities serve as a beginning into the recovery-oriented system, turning a moment of crisis into opportunities for changes.

Our complex-needs facilities have proven successful, and this is why we committed another \$6 million to support the expansion of this service in Prince Albert and North Battleford. Renovations

have begun on the new facility in Prince Albert that is expected to begin operating this summer.

Opioid agonist therapy, commonly known as OAT, is one of the most evidence-based treatments for opioid use disorder. Opioid agonist therapy helps people overcome opioid addictions. Legitimate addiction medications are used to alleviate cravings and manage withdrawal systems.

Expanding and strengthening access to OAT as a cornerstone of our recovery-oriented system of care. Where clinically appropriate, individuals with opioid use disorders can now be assessed and connected to OAT during detoxification and stabilization including encounters with crisis-based service.

A system focused on recovery must also be a consistent system. That is why Saskatchewan is implementing standardized approaches to OAT. Standardization itself reduces gaps, improves safety, and ensures continuity of care when individuals move between services.

Complex-needs facilities contribute here as well, helping ensure individuals do not leave care without a plan or support to continue their recovery journey. This approach focuses on clear pathways from crisis to stabilization to treatment and into long-term recovery in the community.

Through historic investments, innovative services like complex-needs facilities, standardized and accountable treatment pathways, and strong collaboration across the health care system, we are building a model that saves lives today and supports lasting recovery in the future.

Seniors, individuals, and people with disabilities, and families with low incomes will benefit from targeted increases in the 2026-27 budget that help make the cost of daily life more affordable. An \$11.7 million investment will raise core income assistance benefits by 2 per cent starting in May of 2026. Saskatchewan income support, SIS clients will receive higher monthly benefits for the fifth year in a row. And this is the fourth consecutive year monthly benefits will increase for Saskatchewan assured income for disability, SAID clients.

An \$8 million increase will support over 500 more seniors who are already accessing personal care home benefits since the monthly income thresholds rose 40 per cent in '25-26 from 2,500 to \$3,500 a month. This increase helps to make the cost of living in a licensed personal care home more affordable.

A 3.2 million investment will increase monthly Saskatchewan housing benefit rates to help eligible renters better afford their rent and utility costs and expand the program to over 300 new clients. Core monthly benefits will increase by 20 per cent. Renters who receive services to help them maintain stable housing will receive a 40 per cent increase in monthly benefits through the supportive housing stream, and monthly support for individuals fleeing interpersonal violence will double through the Seeking Safety stream.

In 2026-27, community-based organizations across government ministries will receive a 2 per cent increase in funding. This represents a \$10.8 million increase to service providers we contract to help deliver a wide range of services and supports that

enable Saskatchewan people to achieve a better quality of life.

Family-based caregivers, including foster families and extended family care providers, will also receive a 2 per cent increase in basic maintenance.

\$5.4 million as part of a multi-year capital investment to design and build enhanced emergency shelters at sites chosen by municipalities . . . will be in Saskatoon and Prince Albert. This year's budget continues to invest in increasing the availability of safe and appropriate housing for families and for individuals.

The ministry is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of vulnerable children and youth with continued focus on services and supports for at-risk families, children, and youth. An additional \$19.1 million in funding to deliver programs and services that meet the needs of a growing number of children and youth with significant and complex needs placed in out-of-home care.

The ministry is providing an additional \$1.8 million investment to support 24-7 intensive family preservation services, enhanced support for youth to help them successfully transition from care to adult independent life, and funding to support at-risk youth in the community. We will continue to invest and support improved access to services and programs that protect our most vulnerable residents.

Mr. Speaker, I now move that this Assembly supports the Government of Saskatchewan's recovery-oriented system of care and the patients-first health care plan to protect our most vulnerable residents. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the member for Carrot River Valley:

That the Assembly supports the Government of Saskatchewan's recovery-oriented system of care and the patients-first health care plan to protect our most vulnerable residents.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from White City-Qu'Appelle.

Brad Crassweller: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and enter into debate on this motion. And I'd like to thank my colleague the member from Carrot River Valley for so clearly laying out why this motion is so important to Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan families. I now move to adjourn debate.

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 Deputy Government House Leader.

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

Speaker Goudy: — The member has moved to adjourn the House for the week. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt

the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried. This Assembly stands adjourned until Monday afternoon at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:56.]

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