



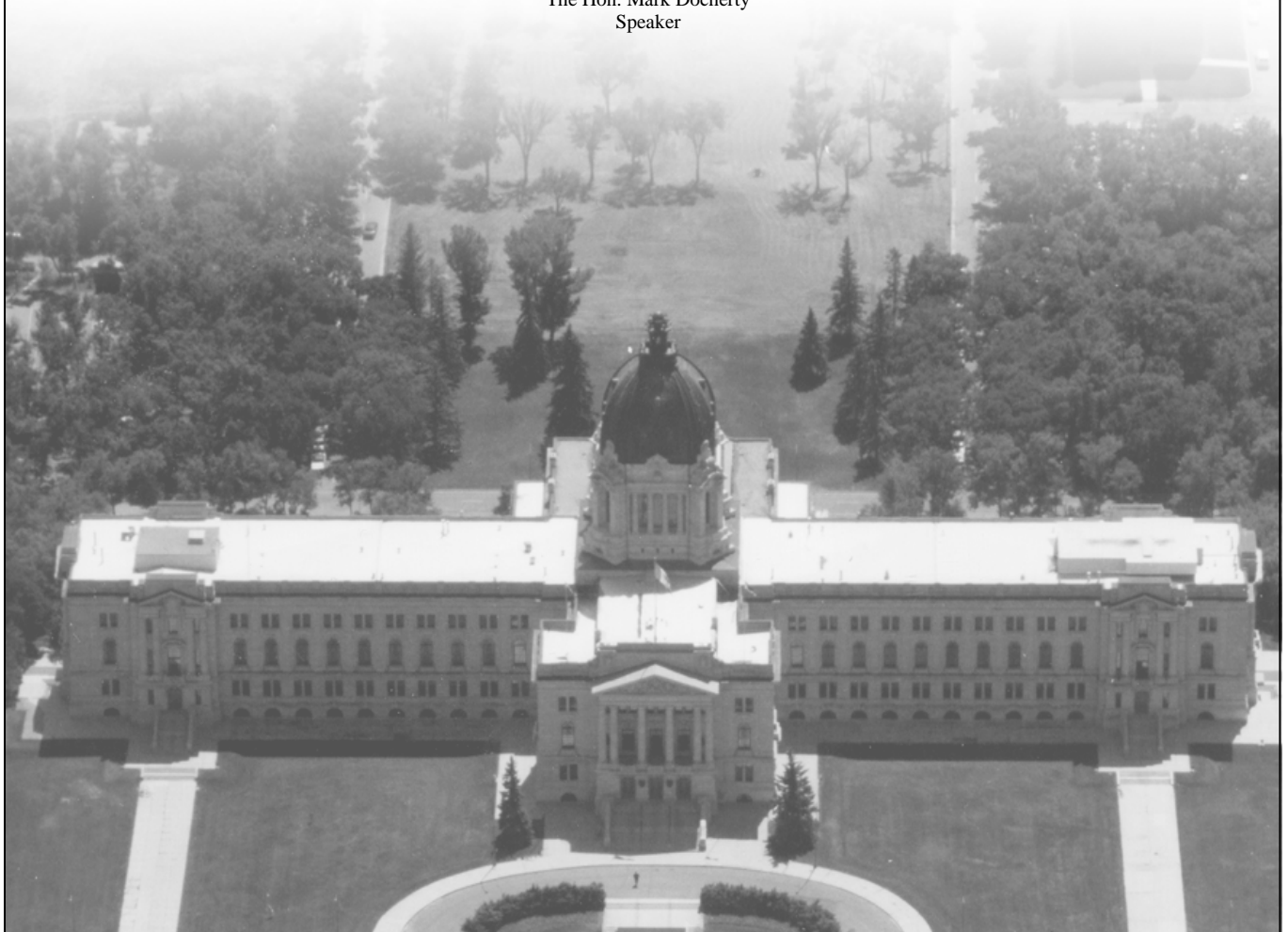
SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)
Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Mark Docherty
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
2nd Session — 28th Legislature

Speaker — Hon. Mark Docherty
Premier — Hon. Scott Moe
Leader of the Opposition — Ryan Meili

Beaudry-Mellor , Hon. Tina — Regina University (SP)	Lawrence , Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)
Beck , Carla — Regina Lakeview (NDP)	Makowsky , Hon. Gene — Regina Gardiner Park (SP)
Belanger , Buckley — Athabasca (NDP)	Marit , Hon. David — Wood River (SP)
Bonk , Steven — Moosomin (SP)	McCall , Warren — Regina Elphinstone-Centre (NDP)
Bradshaw , Fred — Carrot River Valley (SP)	McMorris , Don — Indian Head-Milestone (SP)
Brkich , Hon. Greg — Arm River (SP)	Meili , Ryan — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)
Buckingham , David — Saskatoon Westview (SP)	Merriman , Hon. Paul — Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland (SP)
Carr , Lori — Estevan (SP)	Michelson , Warren — Moose Jaw North (SP)
Chartier , Danielle — Saskatoon Riversdale (NDP)	Moe , Hon. Scott — Rosthern-Shellbrook (SP)
Cheveldayoff , Hon. Ken — Saskatoon Willowgrove (SP)	Morgan , Hon. Don — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)
Cox , Herb — The Battlefords (SP)	Mowat , Vicki — Saskatoon Fairview (NDP)
D'Autremont , Dan — Cannington (SP)	Nerlien , Hugh — Kelvington-Wadena (SP)
Dennis , Terry — Canora-Pelly (SP)	Olauson , Eric — Saskatoon University (SP)
Docherty , Hon. Mark — Regina Coronation Park (SP)	Ottenbreit , Hon. Greg — Yorkton (SP)
Doke , Larry — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)	Rancourt , Nicole — Prince Albert Northcote (NDP)
Duncan , Hon. Dustin — Weyburn-Big Muddy (SP)	Reiter , Hon. Jim — Rosetown-Elrose (SP)
Eyre , Hon. Bronwyn — Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota (SP)	Ross , Laura — Regina Rochdale (SP)
Fiaz , Muhammad — Regina Pasqua (SP)	Sarauer , Nicole — Regina Douglas Park (NDP)
Forbes , David — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)	Sproule , Cathy — Saskatoon Nutana (NDP)
Francis , Ken — Kindersley (SP)	Steele , Doug — Cypress Hills (SP)
Goudy , Todd — Melfort (SP)	Steinley , Warren — Regina Walsh Acres (SP)
Hargrave , Hon. Joe — Prince Albert Carlton (SP)	Stewart , Hon. Lyle — Lumsden-Morse (SP)
Harpauer , Hon. Donna — Humboldt-Watrous (SP)	Tell , Hon. Christine — Regina Wascana Plains (SP)
Harrison , Hon. Jeremy — Meadow Lake (SP)	Tochor , Corey — Saskatoon Eastview (SP)
Hart , Glen — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)	Vermette , Doyle — Cumberland (NDP)
Heppner , Nancy — Martensville-Warman (SP)	Weekes , Randy — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)
Hindley , Everett — Swift Current (SP)	Wilson , Hon. Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)
Kaeding , Hon. Warren — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)	Wotherspoon , Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)
Kirsch , Delbert — Batoche (SP)	Wyant , Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
Lambert , Lisa — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)	Young , Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

Vacant — Regina Northeast

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 48; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 12; Vacant — 1

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Gregory A. Putz

Law Clerk & Parliamentary Counsel — Kenneth S. Ring, Q.C.

Principal Clerk — Iris Lang

Clerk Assistant — Kathy Burianyak

Sergeant-at-Arms — Terry Quinn

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the
Legislative Assembly are available
within hours after each sitting.

<http://www.legassembly.sk.ca/legislative-business/legislative-calendar>

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I would ask for leave to make a statement regarding the National Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job.

The Speaker: — The minister's asked for leave. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

COMMEMORATIVE STATEMENTS

National Day of Mourning

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, as part of this, the member for Prince Albert Northcote will be making part of the reading in of the names, and then I will complete it afterwards, with leave of course.

Mr. Speaker, Saturday, April 28th is the National Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job. We will also be thinking of the family members left behind by those who lost their lives. And on that day, our thoughts will be with those who are dealing with workplace injuries or illnesses. The flags at the legislature will fly at half-mast, and throughout Saskatchewan and the rest of Canada many of us will attend vigils, lay wreaths, or light candles to honour workers killed or injured on the job.

Mr. Speaker, we should not limit ourselves to just one day to reflect on how workplace injuries, illness, and fatalities impact individuals, families, communities, and our province. We need to honour the memories of those we have lost by making a daily commitment to keeping ourselves and each other safe in our homes, communities, and workplaces every day. I call upon my colleagues in the House and everyone in the province to commit to doing just that.

This May marks the 10th anniversary of Mission: Zero. Our goal is zero injuries, zero fatalities, zero suffering. Mr. Speaker, we are making progress. We have seen steady improvement in injury numbers in the province, and our rates are declining faster than in other jurisdictions. However, it is frustrating to see that people continue to suffer due to a lack of compliance with occupational health and safety regulations and without adopting best practices.

Mr. Speaker, last year WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] reported 27 workplace-related deaths in the province. Many of these were caused by exposure to substances such as asbestos many years ago. We have learned from their suffering and have taken measures to protect workers from such exposure. We need to learn from each injury and fatality to ensure that there is no more needless suffering. The only acceptable number of workplace injuries and fatalities is zero.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members please rise while we read the names of those who have lost their lives:

Jesse Hoehn	Clifford McCoy
Michel Ouimet	Murray Workman
Keith Stieb	Randy Steininger
Troy Lucyk	Wayne Suidak
Ted Bielecki	Dale McIntyre
Luc Charbonneau	Thomas McPherson
Wyatt Evans	Gordon Watson

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite will read the next 13 names.

Ms. Rancourt: —

Kamalpreet Cheema	Budd John Aldred
Stanley Zaharuk	Sukhwinder Singh
Adam Vanhatten	Sidney Quibell
Josh Degroot	Melissa Heins
Walter Muller	Joseph Smyrski
Daryl Ray	Wanda Nesbitt
Jack Lutz	

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I would also make mention of the victims of the Humboldt bus tragedy that cut short 16 lives. Also not included among the names we read were the workers who lost their lives working on Saskatchewan farms and ranches each year.

On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, I offer our sincere condolences to everyone who has lost someone. Our thoughts are also with the workers who have suffered injuries or illnesses because of their jobs.

I would now ask, Mr. Speaker, that we observe a moment of silence to commemorate the Day of Mourning.

[The Assembly observed a moment of silence.]

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — I'd like to table two reports. The first one I've got is, in accordance with section 23(1) of *The Public Interest Disclosure Act*, the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner annual report 2017, submitted by Mary McFadyen. I've also got *The Ombudsman Act*, subsection 38(1), *The Ombudsman Act, 2012*, and we're submitting the Ombudsman Saskatchewan annual report 2017.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — And I will start by recognizing we've got two guests sitting in the Speaker's gallery. We've actually got the Ombudsman with us, so Mary McFadyen, the Ombudsman and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner; and with her is Leila Dueck, the director of communications. I look forward to reading your report. Welcome to your legislature. And I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their legislature.

I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly, I have several guests that I'd like to introduce this morning.

First of all, with us from the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation is Heath Dreger, the president of the federation; as well as Darrell Crabbe, the executive director. And they're joined in the gallery by Ministry of Environment officials Chuck Lees and Jeanette Pepper. They are here in the House to celebrate the launch of the game management plan, which we will hear about a little bit later in a member's statement.

And I'd like to take this opportunity to give my thanks to the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation for their expertise and their support in developing this plan. So I would ask that all members would join with me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I'd also like to introduce, seated in your gallery, Todd Myers. He's the director of the Center for the Environment at Washington Policy Center, and he's joined by Todd MacKay, the Prairie director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. Mr. Speaker, these two individuals understand the harmful impact of a carbon tax, that it would have on the provincial economy while not producing environmental benefit. I look forward to meeting with them later today. And I would ask all members to help me in welcoming them to the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join in with the minister in welcoming his guests to the legislature. It's a couple of very important topics that they're dealing with the carbon issue that's in front of us right now.

As well I wanted to say a special hello to the folks in the Wildlife Federation. I can just see Darrell over top of the clock there. He's been a real fixture with the Wildlife Federation for many, many years. Really good stewardship of our wildlife here in Saskatchewan in all the kind of things the Wildlife Federation does, and the president, Heath, as well, and the folks from the ministry. So I'd ask all members to join in welcoming them to their legislature. Thank you.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Lakeview.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling on the Saskatchewan government to stop the attacks on our kids' already-strained classrooms. Those who've signed this petition wish to draw our attention to some points: that the Sask Party cut \$54 million from our kids' classrooms in the devastating 2017-18 budget; that the 2018-19 budget only restores a fraction of last year's devastating \$54 million cut to classrooms; that even though Saskatchewan Party is making us all pay more, our kids are actually getting less; and the Sask Party cuts means that students will lose much needed support in their classrooms, including programs to help children with

special needs.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call upon the government to fully restore cuts to our kids' classrooms and stop making families, teachers, and everyone who works to support our education system pay the price for the Sask Party's mismanagement.

Mr. Speaker, those who have signed the petition today reside in Regina. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Mr. Nerlien: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present another petition from citizens who are opposed to the federal government's decision to impose a carbon tax on the province of Saskatchewan.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the Government of Saskatchewan to take the necessary steps to stop the federal government from imposing a carbon tax on the province.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Frontier, Eastend, Climax, Shaunavon, and Claydon. I do so present.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for critical workplace supports for survivors of domestic violence. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has the very dubious distinction of having the highest rate of intimate partner violence in all of the provinces in Canada, and we all know we must do much more to protect survivors of domestic violence.

For many who experience domestic violence, that violence will follow them to their workplace, which is why the signatories to this petition are calling for five days of paid leave and up to 17 weeks of unpaid leave be made available to workers who are survivors of domestic violence, and that critical workplace supports made available to survivors of domestic violence should also be made available to workers living with PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] as a result of domestic violence.

Mr. Speaker, this is what we call for in our private member's bill, Bill No. 609. It's the fourth time we've tabled these provisions in the House in the last two years. Although the government's picked up some other pieces of bills that we've put forward in private members' legislation, they have refused to pass this particular piece. It's time for them to step up, do the right thing, and pass that legislation.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call upon the Sask Party to pass legislation to ensure critical supports in the workplace, including reasonable accommodation and paid and unpaid leave for survivors of domestic violence.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing this petition today come from Regina. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise again today to present a petition calling for pharmacare here in Saskatchewan. The petitioners point out that Canada is the only country with a universal health care system that doesn't include prescription drug coverage, and this oversight ends up resulting in unnecessary illness and suffering and costs our country billions of dollars.

The petitioners point out that over 90 per cent of Canadians agree that we need a national pharmacare program, which makes total sense because one in five Canadians don't fill necessary prescriptions because the medications cost too much. And the petitioners point out that when we cover essential medications, we improve people's quality of life and save millions in downstream cost.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to immediately support the establishment of universal pharmacare for Saskatchewan patients and advocate for a national pharmacare plan for all Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, this petition today is signed by citizens of Saskatoon. I so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Carrot River Valley.

Nipawin Hawks Win Canalta Cup

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Nipawin Hawks claimed the SJHL [Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League] Canalta Cup Tuesday night after defeating the Estevan Bruins by a score of 2-1 in game seven of a tightly contested series. Goals by team captain Carter Doerksen and Jake Tremblay, and fantastic goaltending by Declan Hobbs propelled the Hawks to this victory. Nipawin now moves on to compete in the ANAVET [Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada] Cup against the MJHL [Manitoba Junior Hockey League] champions, the Steinbach Pistons.

Mr. Speaker, the Hawks should not only be congratulated for their win, but praised for the way they have persevered since the tragic accident. Indeed we are proud of them for their hockey abilities, but even more for the way they have come together to help others and each other. After it was decided the SJHL

playoffs would continue, the board of the Broncos said, "The power of healing is in the game."

[10:15]

After watching the Hawks claim this victory while wearing green helmets in honour of the Broncos, I know this is true. The players from Nipawin, Estevan, and all other teams in the SJHL have shown the world the best of what this province has to offer.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members join me in congratulating the Nipawin Hawks and wishing them the best of luck in the upcoming series. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Prince Albert Northcote.

Day of Mourning

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, back in 1985 Saskatchewan became the first province to recognize April 28th as the international Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured at work. This is a time to remember those we have lost and those who were injured. It's also a time for us to all commit as members of the Assembly to do everything we can to improve safety and supports for workers.

In Saskatchewan we still have a long way to go when it comes to making sure everyone makes it home safe to their family at the end of their shift. We must work together to make sure everyone has what supports they need. Whether they work in a tower, a school, or a factory; whether they drive a dozer, a combine, or a taxi; whether they're a 40-year veteran or brand new on the job, workers are counting on us to ensure workplaces are safe and supports are in place when something does go wrong.

I ask all members to join with me in recognizing the international Day of Mourning, and in redoubling our efforts to end workplace-related deaths and injuries.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Provincial Game Management Plan

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the last three years, the Government of Saskatchewan has worked with stakeholders to develop a provincial game management plan. This plan will provide a framework to manage game species and their habitat, including pronghorn, upland game birds, moose, whitetail deer, mule deer, and elk, as well as wolves and bears.

Mr. Speaker, hunting is an important part of our heritage, culture, lifestyle, economy, and social traditions. Spending time outdoors provides opportunities to be with family and friends. The game management plan outlines key considerations to effectively manage wildlife in Saskatchewan. The plan includes an overview and identifies specific actions regarding hunting and trapping, and identifies game species harvest principles. Hunters and trappers will also need to consult the synopsis to ensure they are familiar with quotas and hunting dates.

Mr. Speaker, the game management plan has the support from a wide range of stakeholders. I wish to thank the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation for their leadership role in promoting and supporting the development plan. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the Wildlife Advisory Committee. This committee represents the major wildlife conservation and landowner stakeholders in the province as well as the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations and the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan.

We look forward to working together to make the implementation of the game management plan a success. And for those that are interested, fishing season starts on May 5th. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Riversdale.

Project Lifesaver Implemented in Saskatoon

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past January, Saskatoon Search and Rescue launched Project Lifesaver in this city. Project Lifesaver first started in Virginia in 1999 as a community-based non-profit to help law enforcement, fire and rescue, and caregivers quickly locate individuals with cognitive disorders. It is now an international organization with similar agencies across the United States and in six provinces in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, Project Lifesaver uses radio frequency technology that has been proven to reduce the time in which it takes to locate individuals. Clients enrolled in Project Lifesaver wear a small transmitter on their wrist or ankle that emits an individualized frequency signal. When an enrolled client goes missing, the caregiver notifies the local police or Project Lifesaver agency, and a trained emergency team responds to the wanderer's area. Recovery times for Project Lifesaver agencies average 30 minutes, which is 95 per cent less time than standard operations without Project Lifesaver.

Saskatoon Search and Rescue saw the success other jurisdictions were having with Project Lifesaver and realized there was a need for this kind of tool here. Over the past four years, the search and rescue organization has averaged 15 to 20 calls for their involvement per year, and three-quarters of those calls involved individuals with cognitive disorders like Alzheimer's, dementia, and autism.

With the help of donors and professional volunteers, the new program is up and running, and on February 24th, 2018, Project Lifesaver Saskatoon signed up its first clients. Mr. Speaker, I would ask members to join me in congratulating Saskatoon Search and Rescue on implementing this program in Saskatoon and for doing this important work. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

2018 Tony Cote Winter Games

Mr. Doke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this month, 3,800 young athletes along with their coaches, chaperones, parents, and supporters were in the heart of Treaty 6 Saskatoon

for the 2018 Tony Cote Winter Games.

Mr. Speaker, this was the first year that the games have been honoured to use the name of Chief Tony Cote who led the Cote First Nation in 1974 when the first province-wide games were held. It was Tony's dream to create a venue for young First Nations athletes to compete provincially in their sport. The games were initially created for youth 14 years and under, and now it extends to 20 years and under.

Mr. Speaker, the Winter Games draws in nearly 10,000 people annually. Therefore, no reserve has the capacity to host all the sports and the teams that show up, so they are held in Saskatoon. A tradition of the games is that former successful athletes are present to act as role models for the attending youth. Three role models attending this year include basketball player, Michael Linklater; volleyball player, Savannah Walking Bear; and Olympian and member of the Canadian women's hockey team, Brigitte Lacquette attended the game as an ambassador.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also take this opportunity to congratulate my grandson who played for BATC [Battlefords Agency Tribal Chiefs] on the gold-winning bantam boys team. This young man possesses soft hands like his grandpa, which got him many goals, and he also possesses a temper like his grandmother that got him many trips to the penalty box.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join with me in commending the organizers, participants, and the supporters of this successful and inspirational event. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood.

2017 Saskatoon Citizen of the Year

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations to Hugo Alvarado as the recipient of the 2017 CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] Saskatoon Citizen of the Year. I was pleased to congratulate Hugo in person at the CTV Saskatoon luncheon held on March 29th.

Hugo was born in Chile, and while attending high school in Santiago, he became very interested in painting and sculpting. Mr. Speaker, instead of pursuing art, Hugo became a civil servant after high school. Hugo was serving during the very dangerous military coup of 1973. He faced prison time in Chile, fighting for what his community needed: medicare, free education, and a better life for all. After being released, Hugo came to Canada in exile in 1976, and when asked by the embassy where he would like to go, he pointed to the middle of a Canadian map and chose Saskatoon.

Facing many obstacles in his first years in Canada, Hugo decided to return to art. He has lived in his home in the Holliston neighbourhood in my constituency for more than 20 years and has evolved from a young Chilean artist who came to this city with nothing, to one of the most recognized artists in Canada.

Hugo has given back to his community through art auctions in support of the Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Centre, the

Saskatoon Crisis Nursery, the Friendship Inn, and CHEP [Child Hunger and Education Program] Good Food.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all in this Assembly to please join me in congratulating Hugo Alvarado on winning the CTV Citizen of the Year. Thank you.

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

Support for Government Position on Carbon Pricing

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, yesterday our government announced the constitutional reference case regarding the federally imposed carbon tax to the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal. Mr. Speaker, already the support that we've heard is overwhelming: Saskatchewan Mining Association, Canadian Taxpayers Federation, Agricultural Producers Association, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, the Saskatchewan Heavy Construction Association, Mr. Speaker, and the list goes on.

Todd MacKay, CTF's [Canadian Taxpayers Federation] Prairie director, said, "Premier Moe's court challenge is an important opportunity to strip away the rhetoric and show the real hardship a carbon tax would impose on Saskatchewan families and businesses."

APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan] president, Todd Lewis, said, and I quote, "Our members strongly believe that carbon taxes do not work for agriculture. The federal government have not been very clear on their understanding of this very basic agricultural economic reality."

CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business] tweeted, "76 per cent of Saskatchewan small business oppose a carbon tax. Only 8 percent support. Pleased that the Saskatchewan government is challenging the federal government's ability to impose a costly carbon tax on the province."

Mr. Speaker, I hope the NDP [New Democratic Party] have been listening and understand how completely offside they are with the rest of this province. Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the people of Saskatchewan do not want a federally imposed carbon tax or an NDP carbon tax, and they support our government's actions.

Mr. Speaker, instead of waving the white flag, the NDP should really be standing up for Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Rancourt: — Asking for leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The member has asked leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Prince Albert Northcote.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to recognize some members from the United Steelworkers union here. I believe they're the largest private-sector union. They're here today to recognize the Day of Mourning, and so I know many will be attending the events also planned across the province on Saturday and also here in Regina.

It's a really important time for us to remember workers who are injured or killed on the job and committing to keeping everybody safe. So I want to thank you for your strong voice, for all the advocating that you do for your members, but not only your members but all workers in Saskatchewan. So thank you.

And I also want to draw attention, I believe Wajid Ali is there as well. Thank you for coming today, Wajid. We know that you were personally affected, your family has been personally affected with workplace injury. And I just want you to be aware that thoughts and prayers are with your brother and your family.

And another family member there . . . Oh, Muhammad, you're here. Wonderful. Yes. Our thoughts and prayers are with you, you know, and your family. And we definitely keep this story close to our heart when we're thinking about making sure workplaces are safe in Saskatchewan.

And so I ask that all members of the Assembly welcome these guests to their Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member opposite on welcoming these individuals who came to the legislature today.

Mr. Speaker, as we heard earlier, workplace safety is and always should be of paramount importance to everybody in the workplace, but in particular I'd like to thank these people who most recently it has become very real to them by having one of their members injured. And I want to thank them for coming, and I realize that their presence here today means that they're not out working and making money otherwise. This is something they're doing on their own time.

So on behalf of all of the members, I want to thank them for being here, for raising issues that are important to workplace safety and important to us as a province, and would ask that all members join in welcoming them here today.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Support for Post-Secondary Institutes

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know how important high-quality higher education is for innovation, for allowing people to pursue opportunities, and for diversifying our economy. We learned late yesterday that Sask Polytechnic will lose 42 employees to layoffs and buyouts after this year's budget froze the provincial operating grant at last year's already

reduced levels. We've also learned that stipends for instructors are being reduced.

At a time when more Saskatchewan people are looking for jobs, when Saskatchewan industries are struggling to adjust to rising costs and to last year's PST [provincial sales tax] expansion, how does the Premier justify these job losses at Sask Polytech to the people who are seeking the high-quality training they need to succeed?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I think it also alluded to, in that specific article, Mr. Speaker, that the changes that were being made at Saskatchewan Polytechnic were not due to the provincial budget, Mr. Speaker, but they were due to the Saskatchewan Polytechnic being responsible with the funds of the people of the province of Saskatchewan in providing the education that they . . . The members opposite laugh, Mr. Speaker. He should read the entire article.

Mr. Speaker, to ensure that they continue to provide the class preferences that people are coming into, Mr. Speaker. And they realign each and every year, Mr. Speaker. I've had these conversations with the management at Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Mr. Speaker, and we continue to always have the conversations with our post-secondary institutes, Mr. Speaker, that I would put forward are funded at a far greater value, at a far greater investment, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of this province than they ever were under the NDP.

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

[10:30]

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we hear these kind of quotes from the Premier trying to defend these choices but, you know, we can't expect a leadership whose budgets are under threat to speak out when they know it only further endangers their funding. And the layoffs and the voluntary severances, they speak for themselves, Mr. Speaker.

The ministers of Advanced Education and Immigration and Career Training wrote to the board Chair of Sask Polytech asking the institution to, I quote, produce 2018-19 budgets with "neutral to positive" impacts on government spending. To translate that doublespeak, Mr. Speaker, they're asking students and instructors to make do with less, as we see in yesterday's job losses. So I ask once again, how does this Premier justify squeezing Sask Polytech at a time when it's so important that people have the training they need to succeed?

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

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sask Polytech is a very strong partner for us, Mr. Speaker, and they also have very, very strong relationships with industry. Mr. Speaker, they're very responsive to labour market demand and they constantly shift their programs accordingly. And to put this into context about why that's so important, Mr. Speaker, the indigenous enrolment levels through that institution have risen by 53 per cent over the last 10 years, and

Sask Poly has reported that 85 per cent of their indigenous graduates are employed. It's part of the smart and, I would argue, effective management of that institution, Mr. Speaker.

And one of the things that the Leader of the Opposition failed to mention was that Anne Neufeld, the provost at Sask Poly, said in the same article in the *StarPhoenix* yesterday, and I quote: "We look at provincial labour market requirements on an annual basis, and then we . . . adjust our programmatic mix and our service delivery based on that — it's part of our overall planning process," Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Former Member and Irrigation Project Approval Process

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, job losses and higher tuition throughout our post-secondary education sector are really not an indication of an investment in the future of this province.

Mr. Speaker, in his ruling on Bill Boyd's environmental charges, Judge J.D. Jackson wrote:

In all of the circumstances, one would have to place Mr. Boyd's efforts to comply and avoid the harm caused at the very low end of the diligence scale. His actions throughout, at a minimum, were highly reckless.

From the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] to the smart meter fiasco, it's hard to think of a better summary of Mr. Boyd's entire time in government — highly reckless, Mr. Speaker.

Yet Mr. Boyd still received approvals for the project in early August, just weeks before he was to be charged and two months after the Minister of Agriculture had asked the Minister of Environment to hold off on approvals until the violations had been addressed. To the Premier: why were these permits ultimately issued even though the investigation into this highly reckless behaviour had not been concluded? Would this not also be an example of behaviour at the very low end of the diligence scale?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated on a number of occasions in the House, in order for an individual to get a licence for an irrigation system, it's a number of steps and processes that they need to go through — several licences and different permits, Mr. Speaker. A couple of days ago the Leader of the Opposition had this to say in the House. He said:

Yet only after that tip from the public that triggered an investigation by a conservation officer was an environmental protection order issued. So why was no such order issued after the early June inspection first confirmed that that infraction had taken place?

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition apparently hasn't been able to understand this yet, and in fact it's right in the news release when the conviction was released, Mr. Speaker. These are two separate infractions. One is on breaking wildlife habitat land; the other was on shoreline damage to . . .

unauthorized alterations to a shoreline. And, Mr. Speaker, the unauthorized alteration to the shoreline didn't happen until July. The WHPA [*The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*] land was being investigated in June, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I think as this case has been shown, Mr. Boyd was treated as every individual in this province would be treated under these same very circumstances.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Global Transportation Hub and Land Transactions

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party claims that they have the dumpster fire at the GTH contained, but really the flames are just getting higher. The land sale to Brightenview, the one that the Sask Party has been talking about for years. That one. The one with much fanfare. The member from Meadow Lake cut the ribbon for, and that very same one that the Sask Party used to justify their outrageous price that was paid to the Sask Party supporter in the infamous land flip. That one, Mr. Speaker. Well that land sale is no longer a sale; it's a lease. So, Mr. Speaker, what happened? Can the minister explain how the GTH allowed this done deal to become undone?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we don't become embroiled in the individual business decisions on a day-to-day basis, hour-by-hour, as the NDP would like us to do. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this. Brightenview made a business decision to lease additional land instead of purchasing it. I can't speak to Brightenview's business plans. Those questions, they would have to pose to Brightenview. What I can say is that they had originally intended to buy 30. They actually ended up buying 10 acres for phase 1 of the project and are leasing 10 acres for an additional 10 years. Mr. Speaker, there's nothing any more complex or any more sinister than that.

I understand that the Brightenview project is nearly complete. If members were out there yesterday, they would have seen the building is largely complete. I understand that there's a number of subdivisions within it for wholesalers to use, and I think that those are largely rented out. But that would be once again a Brightenview issue.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, we did go out yesterday and we saw Loblaw. And actually Loblaw is the one hive of activity out at the GTH, but it's surrounded by empty land.

We're talking about the GTH. It was set up to do intermodal transport. GTH was set up to do intermodal transport. Their entire board of directors are experts in international trade. Are they going to have to let them go now and find experts in property management instead?

Mr. Speaker, in 2013 the former minister, Bill Boyd, described the GTH as the following: "... a distribution and logistics powerhouse on the prairies." How has the GTH gone from this

to being a landlord, is something that this minister has to explain. Why is the Sask Party getting into property management with Brightenview at the GTH?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the members opposite went out there. They saw what a success the Loblaw plants is. They obviously went in; they saw the workers that were there. Had they looked at the rest of the property when they were there, and I hope that they did, they would have seen the enormous potential that's there. They would have seen a rail spur coming in. They would have seen the roadways that were there.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at that project, we see jobs. We see a future. When they look at that, they see an empty place, a place to store Leap Manifestos, a place for them to store their outdated documents, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we don't see it that way. We see this as something that's got enormous potential going forward, and we hope that they do in the future as well.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Global Transportation Hub and Government Transparency

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday when I asked the government to finally allow Laurie Pushor to answer questions about the GTH land deal, the Minister of Trade said, "He'll be attending estimates with the Minister of Energy and Resources, and at that point will be there to support the minister in responding to questions . . ."

So, Mr. Speaker, when Mr. Pushor appears at committee with the Minister of Energy, will the Minister for Energy and Resources allow him to answer questions about what went down at the GTH? Will Laurie finally be free?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Trade.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well, Mr. Speaker, again I think we've canvassed the issue on the floor of the Assembly for the last number of days about how estimates work. And I think members both on this side and that side now have had enough experience to understand how estimates work.

Ministers will go and they ask for a period of time for estimates for particular ministers. I had four hours on Monday night. There'll be some ministers who will be there for longer, some for shorter. We work across the floor with members opposite to schedule that. Officials attend with their minister to whom they report. They answer questions, support their minister in responding to questions which are posed with respect to the estimates that are in front of them. And that's how it will continue to work going forward, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the

minister opposite for mansplaining how estimates work in this Assembly. But, Mr. Speaker, the question wasn't for . . . the question wasn't for the Ministry of Trade . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Just mind, mind your comments. You know full well. I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — I'd like to thank the Minister for Trade for explaining to us how estimates work here in this Assembly, but the . . . in a very condescending way, I may add. But the question was directly for the Minister of Energy and Resources, because she is the one that will be presiding over those estimates when Mr. Pushor will be in the committee room. So the question is for the Minister of Energy and Resources.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Trade.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well you know, Mr. Speaker, we have talked about, across the floor, the nature of estimates. I think we've explained and had discussion and, you know, I'm not seeking to sound condescending, Mr. Speaker, but I know the members opposite are aware of how estimates work. I know that the member, as a former opposition House leader, is aware of the nature of estimates.

I would point out as well, Mr. Speaker, that, I mean, it's a serious matter. We were, on Monday night for instance, approving and reviewing over \$250 million of expenditure. Members opposite, I think I would say, traditionally have taken those estimates seriously. I know numbers of members over there who absolutely do take it seriously, but we have had instances where members attempt to grandstand and attempt to score political points. That's not the place for doing so, Mr. Speaker, in my humble opinion. But that's what we saw from that member, the Leap supporting . . . the Leap Manifesto supporting member for Saskatoon Nutana who I tried to . . .

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Riversdale.

Mental Health Services for Children

Ms. Chartier: — Earlier this week, the Minister for Rural and Remote Health implied there would be supports for kids struggling with mental illness in the new children's hospital. But we know there will not be a pediatric psychiatric unit in the hospital when it opens. And these kids, unlike other kids grappling with illness, will not have the opportunity to heal in the new facility. Children's hospitals across the country have pediatric psychiatric units for children, but Saskatchewan kids in the same spot will remain in the Dubé Centre.

At a time when we should be combatting stigma and making kids suffering with mental illness feel no different from their peers, will this government reconsider and include a pediatric psychiatric unit in the new children's hospital?

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

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the

member for the question. Of course she realizes and I think she believes that children's mental health is very important to this government. And the decision to have the program, or to have the services delivered in this way is not a decision made by the government, Mr. Speaker. It's a decision made by the individuals, the professionals that were designing the new children's hospital and looking after the best interests of these children, Mr. Speaker.

The services that are available, all the professionals — social workers, mental health professionals, psychiatrists — can access and will access those children through those 10 beds in the Royal University Hospital, Mr. Speaker. But those services will also be available to move over when the need arises to service children in the new Jimmy Pattison Children's Hospital.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — The only kids not in the new children's hospital are those with mental health issues, Mr. Speaker. We know that Dubé Centre's child and adolescent unit does good work, but we also know that the adult side is chronically over capacity and those 10 beds could be used to provide additional space. Kids needing mental health supports should be treated the same way as their peers and benefit from the new facility. Child psychiatrists say this decision makes their work more difficult, and how heartbreaking it is for them to tell families their kids will be the only kids not treated there. The separation just further entrenches the stigma of mental health, something we're all trying to combat.

Mr. Speaker, we've been asking for this change for years, and over that same time this government claims they have been trying to do better for Saskatchewan kids. Well here's the opportunity. Will the minister commit that children needing mental health care will have a place in the new children's hospital?

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

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Children will be served in the Dubé Centre in the 10 beds that are specified for their care. And as I said, Mr. Speaker, children that are in the children's hospital needing mental health supports will also have those supports that are also available in the Dubé Centre in the RUH [Royal University Hospital] Mr. Speaker.

But I would also point out that we are doing more, as reflected in the advocate's report, about a more reactive and more responsive service for and care for mental health patients, in particular children, Mr. Speaker. That is why the new emergency department in . . . the new Dubé mental health unit that is opening in the emergency department to be more responsive to mental health patients, that will be moving into the new Jimmy Pattison Children's Hospital emergency department, Mr. Speaker, will have specific space there for those children coming in for emergency services that can be treated right there, Mr. Speaker.

[10:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Lakeview.

Support for Capital Infrastructure in the Education Sector

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party had a decade-long run of record revenue, and anyone who's walked through St. Pius elementary school can tell that they've squandered it. After a decade of prosperity built by the hard work of the people of our province, our kids deserve so, so much better. Leaking roofs, warped floors, closed-off classrooms, and falling ceiling tiles — it's simply unacceptable. How is it that after a decade of prosperity that students in Saskatchewan are being forced to learn in such unacceptable conditions?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I find that question to be remarkable. For this party on this side of the House to take lessons from the New Democrats when it comes to educational capital, Mr. Speaker, is ridiculous.

Mr. Speaker, we've had some great success with respect to ensuring that we're providing the educational environments for students in our classrooms, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me just give you some numbers. We've opened 40 new schools in this province, Mr. Speaker, over the 10 years, something we're very proud of, including last year, Mr. Speaker, the largest capital infrastructure in the education sector in the history of this province, Mr. Speaker. And we're very proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

We've also increased, Mr. Speaker . . . We have emergent funding, \$25 million, Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget to deal with emergent needs, Mr. Speaker. None under that side, Mr. Speaker. We've got \$179 million in preventative maintenance and renewal, Mr. Speaker, up 15 per cent over last year, Mr. Speaker, something that the school divisions have been very happy to receive, Mr. Speaker. None under that government, Mr. Speaker.

If we were going to take a lesson from the New Democrats, Mr. Speaker, we'd be closing 176 schools instead of building 40 new schools, Mr. Speaker. More to come, more work that we need to do, Mr. Speaker, but we're committed to doing it.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Lakeview.

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, the minister likes to talk about the joint-use schools but he forgot to mention that the school in Harbour Landing is already over capacity and there is no plan to deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to new schools, in the Sask Party's budget the funds for replacement schools simply are not there. Boards need to know if they should put a new roof on their aging schools or if they have the support that they need for a rebuild. There's no predictability for boards and there's no plan to replace aging schools, like St. Pius, all over our province. There's only one thing that's predictable, Mr. Speaker, and that is that the money won't be there. When will the Sask Party come up with a transparent and predictable plan that takes care of growth and replaces these aging schools?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, we opened 20 new schools last year in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That's remarkable, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to have conversations with school boards. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, our commitment with respect to preventative maintenance and renewal, Mr. Speaker, our commitment with respect to emergent funding is helping with the needs.

Mr. Speaker, and specifically with respect to St. Pius, I want to quote the director of education from the Catholic school division. He said:

It's safe for students and staff to attend in a learning environment in the condition of the school. We test it regularly to make sure that the safety standards are up to scratch so that we don't have concerns there.

Mr. Speaker, that's from the director of education, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to work with our school divisions, Mr. Speaker, make sure that they have the resources available to maintain schools. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue with the capital plan, Mr. Speaker. We have more to say about that, more work to be done in this sector obviously, Mr. Speaker, but this government's committed to it.

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

Commercial Development in Wascana Park

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, the good people of Regina just love Wascana Park. Have a look out the window or out the door this day, Mr. Speaker, and you'll see how true that is. But people also know that when it comes to Wascana, they just can't trust the Sask Party.

A year ago the Sask Party took over control of the Wascana Centre Authority. We asked written questions about the impact of development in the park because people had concerns. The answers show that the office tower plan for the replacement of the CNIB [Canadian National Institute for the Blind] building shows that the square footage will increase by nearly four times as much, and they plan to nearly double the amount of surface parking.

That's right, Mr. Speaker. They plan to take a larger share of the people's Wascana Park paradise to put up an even bigger parking lot. To the Minister Responsible for the Provincial Capital Commission: how does that make any sense?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Central Services.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question. As the member knows or should know, commercial development has always been possible in Wascana Park. The CNIB building was built in the '50s, and the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] building is there as well. They do follow very stringent and strict guidelines, and the Provincial Capital Commission oversees commercial developments within the Wascana Centre.

Now let's talk specifically about the building the member mentions, the CNIB. Mr. Speaker, I submit to you the clients of CNIB, where better to serve those clients than in a park in the heart of Regina, Wascana . . . [inaudible] . . . I think it's well served and I think it's work that's being well done and certainly overseen.

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

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, we know that this government is so excited about the plans they have for Wascana Park that they took the responsibility of it away from a Regina minister and put this jewel of the city of Regina in the hands of a minister from Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, the duck-and-cover routine is pretty clear.

So I guess for the minister, I have the following question: given that this is now another large-scale commercial development on tap for the . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — I'll remind the member that all members are honourable, so I'm sure they take their jobs seriously. Period. I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Well thanks for the reminder, Mr. Speaker. In terms of this government taking over control of Wascana Centre Authority, tearing up a tripartite agreement that's been around since the '60s, Mr. Speaker, how is it that we've got the large-scale commercial development cranked up with a cash-strapped, desperate government presiding over a fire sale? I guess my question to the minister is this: what's next?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Central Services.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I've been a member of this legislature for quite some time, and I don't know if I've heard such a ridiculous statement. I am not a minister for Saskatoon. I am not a minister for Regina. I'm a minister for the province of Saskatchewan.

Every member of this House, every member of this House should be proud of Wascana Park. We should be proud of the Provincial Capital Commission. In fact that is where we come to work every day, in this park, and it's part of the Capital Commission. So I think the member opposite should be embarrassed by that statement.

More importantly though, we will continue to do the good work to ensure that the CNIB building is refocused and is enabled to serve those clients that much need that help, and we will do so in a manner that follows some strict and stringent guidelines, as we've done in the past. And we're very proud to do so, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In terms of what this government has presided over, Wascana in particular, let's review. They took a tripartite agreement that

had been around since the '60s — which successfully shared the power between the university, the city of Regina, and the province — and took it over so that they have a majority control on the board. And when this was going on, Mr. Speaker, no lesser person than a former, a former candidate for that party said that in terms of the budget and the move that that came with, that candidate said that the budget had come like a thief in the night, Mr. Speaker, in terms of what the plans were for Wascana Centre. And it wasn't too long after that that they took over control of the board.

So I guess my question again is this, Mr. Speaker. In terms of their plan for the ongoing fire sale with which they're approaching Wascana Centre, what's next?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Central Services.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, more ridiculous comments by the member opposite. The Provincial Capital Commission is governed by a board that has many capable individuals on it, some members from Regina that are here as well, and others that have interest in the entire province.

Wascana Centre had a master plan in place since 1913 to guide development such as this, uses in the park. The master plan will continue to guide the development of structures, infrastructures, and landscapes throughout the park now and into the future, Mr. Speaker. And again all members should be very proud of one of the jewels of Saskatchewan that is an interest to all MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] from every constituency in Saskatchewan. Thank you very much.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Riversdale.

Need for Pharmacare

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to . . . At the end of my 15 minutes, I'll be moving a motion:

That this Assembly calls upon the federal government to move beyond words and fully fund a national pharmacare strategy so that all Canadians will be able to afford their prescription drugs.

You've got me for 15 minutes, Mr. Speaker. We'll see how long . . . or how my voice does here today.

So I can tell you as the Health critic, Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that presents most often in my office is the struggle that people have in paying for their prescription drugs, whether it's the day-to-day drugs — people managing their diabetes treatments — or actually more difficult situations or issues around some of the orphan drugs for illnesses like cystic fibrosis, Mr. Speaker. And I know even last summer, Mr. Speaker, or last budget when the government was initially going to add PST to health benefits, people who purchased health benefits, I heard from many seniors who buy health benefits to provide that extra coverage for themselves for

things, including drugs, that this was going to be an additional burden to them to be able to access their medications. And I heard from employers and organizations who were concerned about the PST on their health care benefits and that would cause them to not be able to afford the drugs, Mr. Speaker, or to provide a robust employers' plan, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, I was glad to see the government roll that back. To see that adding 6 per cent PST to health insurance was, quite frankly, unhelpful and a harmful idea, Mr. Speaker. I have to point out that pharmaceuticals are so essential to health and well-being that the World Health Organization has declared that access to essential medicines is a human right. The WHO [World Health Organization] recommends countries protect that right in law and with pharmaceutical policies that work in conjunction with their broader systems of universal health coverage.

Consistent with those WHO recommendations, every developed country, Mr. Speaker, every developed country with a universal health care system provides universal coverage of medically necessary prescriptions, except Canada, Mr. Speaker. We're the only country. Millions of Canadians have no drug coverage at all, and millions more have coverage that is inadequate to ensure access to medicines. As a result, almost one quarter of Canadians report they or members of their household have not taken medicines as prescribed because of costs.

And again, that is, with respect to Saskatchewan . . . Actually, I'll point something out here in a moment. According to a 2015 Angus Reid survey, 20 per cent of respondents in Saskatchewan said they or someone else in their household hadn't taken medications as prescribed because they couldn't afford to. Again, as the Health critic, Mr. Speaker, I hear that in my office frequently: people making the decision between taking medications or choosing to pay rent, choosing to pay power bills, to put food on their table, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. That is a very real choice.

And sometimes not only are patients not filling their prescriptions, but they will take managing them into their own hands and they'll ration, which is not good for them or their health, but can wind up with them ending up in the emergency room, Mr. Speaker. We have increased waits in our emergency department, and I would argue in part it's because people don't have the ability to manage their chronic illnesses and take their medications regularly.

The 2016-17 budget resulted in 66,000 families with children and 120,000 seniors paying more for medications because of drug plan increases from this government, Mr. Speaker. I just actually want to point to this government's record on, generally speaking, with respect to coverage of drugs. So when it comes to seniors, in 2007 when this government came to power, there was a program that saw seniors over 65 would pay no more than \$15 for prescriptions under the Saskatchewan formulary. So low-income seniors who got the GIS [guaranteed income supplement], SIP [Saskatchewan Income Plan], or special support coverage, who pay less than 15, would continue to do so. So that was under the previous administration, Mr. Speaker.

[11:00]

When the Sask Party came to power, they added an income-tested component to that, which created a problem for some seniors for sure, Mr. Speaker. But along the way here . . . So the copay was . . . or it was a \$15 limit, Mr. Speaker, and then the Sask Party raised it to 20, and then in the '16-17 budget, they added another \$5 for seniors to pay. But along the way there, actually, they also increased the income threshold. They changed the income threshold that determines eligibility for the seniors' drug plan, lowering it from the federal age credit to the provincial age credit. So July 1st, 2015 the threshold went from 80,255 to less than 65,515 or less. So back in 2015, that saw 6,000 seniors removed from the drug plan.

We've also, as I said, pointed out in this budget that there were cuts to the family drug plan as well. And I also need to point out it's not just been direct cuts to the plan that has been a problem. The Saskatchewan employment supplement, which is something meant for low-income families, the working poor, Mr. Speaker, which is a real issue because they're often not covered by private health benefits. But under this government, Mr. Speaker . . . I'm just going to look at my notes here. In the 2016-17 budget again, they changed the Saskatchewan employment supplement, which helps the working poor, particularly single-parent families. They moved from, they say, targeting those most in need by providing money for children over age 12, but those who were already getting the assistance for older children were grandfathered and retained the assistance. But then they eliminated the grandfathering to save the province money, the government said.

So the thing that the access to the employment supplement does, it also allows you to access family health benefits, Mr. Speaker. So they kicked families off of that particular program as well. So it's important to point out . . . So their track record around medications, let alone pharmacare, but their track record around cost of medications has not been great, Mr. Speaker.

In Saskatchewan even publicly funded programs require copayments or deductibles, which has been proven to reduce access, Mr. Speaker. According to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, even charges as low as \$2 have been found to be a barrier to taking medication as prescribed. And I can tell you that copays are much more than \$2 for lots of people. The family health benefits of which I was just speaking . . . So parents or legal guardians covered under family health benefits receive drug coverage with \$100 semi-annual family deductible and 35 per cent consumer copayment thereafter. And children would get covered if you were under family health benefits program from which they removed members, Mr. Speaker. So even copays result in people skipping medications, not filling prescriptions, and being less healthy, Mr. Speaker.

Canada's patchwork of private and public drug plans leaves millions of Canadians without coverage. As a result, studies show Canadians are three to five times more likely to skip prescriptions because of costs than are residents of comparable countries with universal pharmacare programs.

It is well documented that financial barriers to necessary medicines result in worse health for patients either because they aren't receiving proper treatment or because they have to give up the other necessities, such as food, to pay for drugs. Failing to manage chronic illnesses like diabetes or hypertension can

lead to further complications and hospitalizations and result in unnecessary increases in the use of hospital and medical care.

I know that in this last budget, one positive move this government finally made was fully funding HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] medications, Mr. Speaker, after being prodded by many people, the opposition included. And I know talking to my colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, in his own medical practice, the 7 per cent or so of people who weren't covered, the working poor who weren't covered under the previous programs, Mr. Speaker, he talked of people rationing their medications, and then they become less effective, which isn't good for the individual and it isn't good for the overall system, Mr. Speaker.

Meanwhile, the proportion of our health care budgets, both public and private, going to cover drug costs continues to rise. This leaves insurers, both public and private, little alternative but to reduce coverage to save money. We are paying even more and getting even less. I mean, and I've talked at the beginning of my comments about this government's plan last year that they've thankfully changed their mind on, but the 6 per cent PST on health benefits, Mr. Speaker, or health insurance, was ridiculous.

I talked to many employers who pointed out that they would, under that circumstance, be able to provide their employees much less. And I talked to employees who were very concerned about their own drug coverage or coverage of other health care.

Mr. Speaker, ensuring universal access to medically necessary prescription drugs is not only the right thing to do; it can also be the financially responsible thing to do. Research shows that Canadians spend 50 per cent more per capita on pharmaceuticals — 50 per cent more per capita on pharmaceuticals — than residents of the United Kingdom, Sweden, New Zealand, and several other countries with universal pharmacare programs. This amounts to spending \$12 billion more each year and still not having pharmacare.

Because universal pharmacare programs in other countries use their purchasing power to obtain better drug prices than our fractured system. Among many other examples of such price differences: a year's supply of atorvastatin, a widely used cholesterol drug, costs about \$143 in Canada but only \$27 in the United Kingdom and Sweden and under \$15 in New Zealand.

Pharmacare is achievable and financially viable. Every comparable universal health care system in the world proves that this is the case because they all provide better access to medicine for less than Canada now pays. A universal public pharmacare system, one coordinated across provinces in ways similar to how federal, provincial, and territorial governments purchase vaccines and blood supply products, would achieve equity-of-access goals while saving Canadians between 4 billion and \$11 billion per year.

Collaboration between the provinces and the federal government on a pharmacare program that included a shared formulary, a single bulk purchaser of drugs, and clear guidelines around both cost and medical effectiveness could save Canadians billions of dollars best spent elsewhere in the

system. Comparable countries that integrate drug coverage into their universal public health care system achieve more equitable access to medicines at far lower total costs than Canada spends on our system today.

Saskatchewan businesses would benefit from a pharmacare program. The rising cost of pharmaceuticals are a growing burden for businesses. Part of the problem is that Canadian employers waste between 3 billion and \$5 billion per year because employment-related private insurance is ill equipped to manage pharmaceutical costs effectively. Another part of the problem is that the number of prescription drugs costing more than \$10,000 per year has grown almost tenfold in the past decade. Because such costs can quickly render a work-related health plan unsustainable, particularly for small businesses, it is best to manage them at a province- or a nation-wide basis.

A recent national survey by the Angus Reid Institute found that a vast majority of Canadians — 87 per cent — support adding prescription medications to Canadian medicare. This support exists equally in terms of regions, age groups, incomes, and education levels. Universal public pharmacare is also supported by health professionals, unions, policy experts, businesses, citizen groups, health charities, health executives, municipalities, and provincial governments.

Public spending in Saskatchewan covers roughly half the cost of prescription medicine. An estimated one in three of the province's 573,700 workers — 191,233 — don't have health benefits, according to the Wellesley Institute. In Canada, only about 27 per cent of part-time workers have prescription drug coverage. Those are incredibly vulnerable people, Mr. Speaker. That means that about three-quarters of Saskatchewan's 100,900 part-time workers don't have prescription drug coverage. This patchwork coverage leaves many in Saskatchewan without access to the medication they need either because they don't have a prescription drug plan or have plans that don't cover the cost.

This patchwork of insurance coverage and non-coverage that exists for prescription drugs is one of the biggest failings of our health care system in Canada. The very poor, the unemployed, the unemployable, the elderly, and sometimes children are picked up by a mix of provincial programs, also with varying degrees of quality. And gaps between public and private coverage can mean those with chronic drug-dependent conditions or those faced with catastrophic illnesses are often saddled with huge out-of-pocket expenses.

Mr. Speaker, I have got much more to say, but I see that my time is near for . . . I'm running out of time here and need to move my motion.

I would like to move:

That this Assembly calls upon the federal government to move beyond words and fully fund a national pharmacare strategy so that all Canadians will be able to afford their prescription drugs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for

Saskatoon Riversdale:

That this Assembly calls upon the federal government to move beyond words and fully fund a national pharmacare strategy so that all Canadians will be able to afford their prescription drugs.

Pleasure of the Assembly to adopt? I recognize the Provincial Secretary.

Hon. Ms. Wilson: — Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to take part in this debate on the opposition's motion. However, my sympathies to the member from Saskatoon Riversdale on her sore throat today. No pun intended, but there's probably some good drugs out there that would help you.

So the motion for the opposition is:

That this Assembly calls upon the federal government to move beyond words and fully fund a national pharmacare strategy so that all Canadians will be able to afford their prescription drugs.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that would be lovely, but at what price? How many discussions? And what is the plan? We cannot support the motion until we have a clear picture, clear indication that the federal government would be a full funding partner.

Saskatchewan does have one of the most comprehensive drug plans in Canada, and one that our government is proud of. And that saying, we are always open to ideas, Mr. Speaker, to give a better quality of life, to give a better quality of life for all Saskatchewan citizens from north to south, from east to west on this vast, beautiful province. So we are, yes of course we are open to ideas. We want to work for the good of the people, but we also need to continue to educate ourselves. And we are open to recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, our people are our most valuable asset, but for democracy to work we need to serve and we need to represent our people with open minds. But reason serves we need a better understanding of what this pharmacare will be. We do have an obligation to protect Saskatchewan citizens and the sustainability of this proposed strategy.

Mr. Speaker, we will gladly have discussions, but we're not prepared to endorse as yet what we don't know. We want the feds to fully fund this partnership, and we are not opposed, but we need satisfaction. And one of the concerns is the high cost of drugs. We'd be very hopeful in the discussion of making . . . that the drugs would be more affordable. But it's not logical, Mr. Speaker. How do we endorse something we don't know about?

But in talking about the budget — I was listening intently to the member from Saskatoon Riversdale — she was saying our health care, the budget didn't give enough to the people. So I'd like to put on record our 2018-19 budget invests a record 5.36 billion for the Ministry of Health.

We've got funding. A 2.8 million investment will fulfill

government's commitment to provide individual funding for children with autism spectrum disorder. A 600,000 investment will provide universal drug coverage to HIV medications for those in need. Fifty thousand for AIDS [acquired immune deficiency syndrome] in Saskatoon, and an additional 50,000 for Saskatoon's Westside Clinic to provide HIV supports for those in need, Mr. Speaker. We also have a 523,000 investment to create universal newborn hearing screening program to provide babies born in Saskatchewan with a screening test. We also have a commitment to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind for vision loss rehabilitation services and equipment with a funding of \$500,000.

[11:15]

So, Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to helping people. We all want the best for the quality of life for Saskatchewan people. We want the best health care. We want the best drug plan for our families and our communities. In the 2018-19 budget, over 99 million in capital funding. Over 99 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this will help the quality of life for Saskatchewan people.

So we are open to ideas and suggestions, but we also need a commitment in funding and satisfaction in a full funding partner. Back in our 2016 budget, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency received more than 167 million in funding, and this was a substantial increase in funding and it helped pay for the addition of 14 new cancer drugs that were approved.

So, Mr. Speaker, the health budget included funding to fulfill the government's campaign commitment to expand its advanced remote presence technology to our northern communities in Saskatchewan. And this project allows health care professionals to be virtually present with patients and provide real-time assessment, diagnosis, and patient management. That, Mr. Speaker, is an incentive to helping people in northern Saskatchewan, helping change lives for the better, and enhancing the ability to live in our more isolated communities and still have a good quality of health care.

However, Mr. Speaker, implementing a national pharmacare plan would be very complex and something some of our provinces and territories would be unlikely to consider in the absence of a partnership with the federal government and federal funding. Now this topic has been discussed for a number of years with other provinces discussing their needs. And our problem is, what is the uniformity of it? Will it be right across Saskatchewan statistically by numbers? So there is a number of things that we are wondering about, Mr. Speaker.

And it's interesting to note that discussions about national pharmacare have existed for decades; in fact the federal Liberals first included it in their 1997 platform. However the discussions have always stalled due to the lack of federal willingness to entertain funding. Now Saskatchewan is open to the idea of a national pharmacare program. We're not saying it isn't. But we are hopeful for more affordable medications for those in need, but again we also need satisfaction and answers and commitments. And the question is, how as a province do we endorse something we don't know enough about? We're obligated as a government to protect, understand, and need . . .

of how this is going to work for the citizens of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we do understand the cost of prescription medications can be a financial burden for individuals and families, and we understand the pressures facing young families, students, and seniors across the province. But I do applaud all involved for helping those in need and making Saskatchewan stronger, and we're very proud of some of our initiatives.

Saskatchewan's drug plan offers comprehensive coverage to residents and is one of the best in the country. In fact the public share of total prescription drug spending varies among the provinces. Saskatchewan has the highest with 48 per cent, and New Brunswick has the lowest with 29 per cent. So our provincial government has special programs to assist seniors, children, residents with low incomes. And we are a growing province, and by working together we will help Saskatchewan people get through. We also continue to partner with other jurisdictions through the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance to make medications more affordable for patients.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do understand the need for life-changing medications and prescriptions that give a better quality of life to children and our seniors. And I know the need of life-saving drugs to help our Saskatchewan people breathe better or process sugar or lower cholesterol. People with heart disease or leukemia, these medications and drugs do give you a chance.

So, Mr. Speaker, we currently have a large number of programs that provide comprehensive coverage to Saskatchewan residents. And we as a society have a deep-seated need to relieve pain and suffering, so we do have the children's drug plan and palliative care and seniors' drug plan and special supports, Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living. And, Mr. Speaker, I find myself . . . Down the road perhaps someday I will need medications and care as well. However the time is coming when we will all need benefits of drugs.

And I am very pleased to have participated in this motion; however, in conclusion, I look forward to listening to more. Thank you.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this case of . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Sorry. I recognize the member, the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meili: — Oh, I'm sorry; I failed to be recognized. Pardon me.

The Deputy Speaker: — Go ahead.

Mr. Meili: — Thanks. Pardon me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this question of pharmacare is certainly one that is very close to my heart. Coming as I do from the profession of medicine, it is something that I saw frequently affecting the lives of my patients.

I can recall a situation where a younger woman who was a patient of mine who did not have coverage for medication. And we were able to, through a fund that was available through the clinic, get her the medication she needed, and there were tears of joy. She was so excited at that very unlikely thing because she, and so many, have that experience of needing medications, knowing that that's what's been prescribed, knowing that that's what will make a difference in their health, but not being able to afford to actually purchase those medications. And this certainly was not an isolated incident in my practice. It was part of our daily discussions, was how to get people the medications they couldn't afford. Patients were having to choose between paying for the medications they needed and paying for their rent.

And, Mr. Speaker, this certainly isn't isolated to my practice. We hear this from colleagues across the country, colleagues who are regularly having to have that conversation with their patients where they say, you need these six medications, and the patients say, well we can only afford one or two. And they're having to say which ones they would choose, even though all six are needed. And this is a common experience across the country. In fact a poll from a couple of years ago showed that one in five Canadians are having to make decisions like cutting pills in half or skipping doses or not filling prescriptions at all because they're not able to afford the medications they need.

So why is that? Why is that the case in Saskatchewan and in Canada? Why is that? Because Canada is the only OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] country that has a universal, publicly funded health system that doesn't include medication coverage. We cover over 90 per cent of medical costs, over 90 per cent of hospital costs, but less than 40 per cent of medication costs. And that leaves many people without coverage. It also results in what we've seen, which is the fastest rising cost in our health care system is medications. It's grown to \$30 billion a year, over four times as much as it was 20 years ago. The result of that is that we are paying, in Canada we pay the highest prices in the world for generic drugs, the second-highest prices in the entire world for brand name drugs. We're not getting these medications at a good price.

And who's paying? The patients are paying, or they're not paying because they can't even afford to. And we are paying when people show up with the impacts of not being able to take those medications. They're showing up later with heart troubles, with strokes, things that could have been prevented. That's why our costs in medications are going through the roof, that's why our overall health costs continue to rise, and that's why so many people are having to make that choice between paying for their rent and paying for the medications they need to stay healthy.

It's also why so many Canadians support the idea of pharmacare. Over 90 per cent of Canadians polled think that it's a good idea for us to have universal pharmacare. They recognize the importance. It's also why experts in the field support this idea. Two years ago there was a Canadian Medical Association general conference, and over 90 per cent of the physicians present voted in favour of a universal pharmacare program. It makes so much sense, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we have so much support for it. The idea just makes that much

sense.

A study from 2015 by Dr. Steve Morgan and some other folks, Danielle Martin and other experts in the field, show that \$7 billion would be saved to our national expenditures on drugs if we had a universal pharmacare plan. Seven billion dollars decreased costs with almost no cost to governments, and that was, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that was a very conservative estimate of what the savings would be.

Where do those savings come from? They come from bulk buying. When you buy as a country, as a whole, you manage to get a better price. And we've seen that already at the provincial level where Quebec was recently able to negotiate a 40 per cent decrease in what they were paying for their medications.

We see it at a national level. New Zealand, a country much smaller, much smaller population than ours, has been able to negotiate a much better deal for their medications. There's a drug called atorvastatin or Lipitor. To buy that drug in Canada, we pay 10 times as much for the exact same pill in New Zealand. It doesn't make a lot of sense. If we were bulk buying, if we had a national pharmacare program the way that they do, we'd be able to drive those prices down.

The other way that this drives prices down is through an approach that we are referring more and more to as the Choosing Wisely approach, where we have about 30 per cent of our health care spending going to medications and other treatments, procedures and imaging that isn't actually medically necessary. And when you do the Choosing Wisely approach, when you bring in a universal pharmacare program with an evidence-based formulary, you're able to really concentrate on the medications that are the right ones to buy, get them at the best price, get people the best outcomes, and reduce those extra costs.

And we've seen efforts from this government to try to reduce costs through the lean method. However, you know, what that really focused on was trying to do what we already do, faster, more efficiently. And there may be opportunities for savings there, but you actually need to step back further and ask, are we doing the right things? Are we doing the evidence-based, cost-effective choices?

The third element, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is an element that wasn't even calculated into that \$7 billion in savings. When we look at that \$7 billion, that's just in getting better prices for the medications. What we need to also recognize is that the downstream costs . . . When you look at paying for people's high blood pressure pills, when you pay for their diabetes medications, then you don't have to end up paying for their dialysis or their stroke rehab unit. So we would be saving billions and billions of dollars more when it comes to our health care if we had universal pharmacare.

So the other day here in question period I asked the Premier, I asked him whether he would be willing to join with us and support our call for national pharmacare, and at first it seemed like he was into the idea. At first he seemed like he was willing to get on board, but then as we discussed it further he seemed to back away from that. And that confusion on that side of House, you know, added to some confusion over here. We're confused

about what is not to like. Is it the savings for governments in the purchase of medications? Is it the savings in paying for health care costs as we prevent further illness? Or is it the improved health outcomes for individuals? Which of these does this government not see as a positive thing? Because, Mr. Speaker, it's very clear: with pharmacare we would have universal coverage so that no patient would have to make the choice between paying for the medications they need, the evidence-based treatment they need, and having to pay for their rent or having to pay for food.

Now we heard objections over there about, well maybe what we get from a universal national pharmacare program wouldn't be as good as what we already have in Saskatchewan. But I guess the other question then would be, what part of "universal, publicly funded" does the government not understand? We need to make sure that if we're going to have a pharmacare program, it is of the best quality and for that we need this government to actually step up because they have the opportunity to stand up and say to the federal government that yes, we want a universal program. We want it to be national. We want it to be first-dollar so that every person has access. And we want to use that program to drive down costs in drug costs, drive down costs in health care costs, and improve health outcomes, improve the lives of Canadians.

[11:30]

Unfortunately while this government does like to rail against the federal government, their advocacy at that level is tremendously ineffective. They continually are unsuccessful in getting what they want out of the federal government.

Here's an opportunity where we've heard signals from the federal government. We hear loud and clear from people around the country that they want this. Here is an opportunity for this government to step up, to join us, and say yes, we want a universal program. We want it as soon as possible, and we want it to be top quality.

All the evidence is there. The public's on board. Will this government join us and join me and this caucus in supporting this measure asking the federal government to implement a national pharmacare program? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Westview.

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am happy today to stand up and reply to the motion from the member from Saskatoon Riversdale to call upon the federal government to fully fund a national pharmacare strategy. But, Mr. Speaker, when you skim the surface of this motion, it presents a lot of concern for me that we don't have enough facts to even discuss it in a meaningful manner.

Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, already has one of the most comprehensive drug plans in all of Canada. And so we can't just assume that a national plan would be better than the Saskatchewan plan we have already, and it might be even worse.

Across Canada, Mr. Speaker, the public cost share varies

among the provinces, and in Saskatchewan the share is 48 per cent, which is the highest in Canada. New Brunswick, Mr. Speaker, is the lowest at 29 per cent. So there's quite a little variance among the provinces. And I think we have a very good plan. Saskatchewan residents already have a great plan, and I think we need to be careful before we sign up to any national plan.

Mr. Speaker, I think one of the first questions that maybe we need to ask is, what is the goal of a national pharmacare plan? Is it to have a common formulary of drugs covered under the plan? Is it affordability? And who will be covered? Everyone? Certain groups? Certain income levels? And what drugs would be covered? The essential medications? The expensive medications? All medications? Mr. Speaker, I think those are all important questions that we need to ask.

And, Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan there are over 1,400 drugs on the formulary, and that is a 36 per cent increase since 2007 when the Saskatchewan Party formed government. And Saskatchewan has special programs to assist seniors, children, and residents with low incomes and others as well.

And there is no solid information on the cost of implementing a national pharmacare plan here in Saskatchewan. So, Mr. Speaker, right off the start, there is no way we can support this plan without knowing the basics. Would this be a plan that would be fully funded by the federal government? And if not, by who? Mr. Speaker, what is the cost to Saskatchewan? A billion dollars? \$5 billion? We know that the NDP have not costed projects in the past when they think that we should move ahead on a project.

And, Mr. Speaker, let's look at the last leadership campaign for the NDP. They never costed any of their leadership promises, and when we did the work for them, they were completely surprised at the cost of \$2.5 billion. \$2.5 billion per year with no plans on how they would fund this campaign plan. Mr. Speaker, there is no information that would give us any indication of how this would impact Saskatchewan financially.

Mr. Speaker, our government would be open to hearing more about a federal pharmacare plan, and we would be glad to engage in discussions and fully collaborate with the federal government. But again I emphasize, we need to have a lot more information before we even consider it would be in the best interests of Saskatchewan residents.

Mr. Speaker, affordable access to medications is an area of a great importance to our government, and Saskatchewan would be open to the idea of a national pharmacare plan. However, Mr. Speaker, implementing a federal pharmacare plan would be complex and something provinces and territories would be unlikely to consider in the absence of a partnership with the federal government and federal funding.

Mr. Speaker, we need to keep in mind that when medicare started, the federal government committed to covering 50 per cent of the cost. Well today, Mr. Speaker, the Canada Health Transfer accounts for 20 per cent of the cost. So we need to ask the question: is this how the federal government will treat pharmacare? And if so, how much will it cost? Will this be yet another program forced upon the Saskatchewan people and with

Saskatchewan taxpayer money?

I would emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that discussions have been ongoing for decades. However the discussions have always stalled due to the lack of federal willingness to entertain funding.

Mr. Speaker, it is not surprising of the members opposite to put forward a motion to spend money without any information as to the financial impact on our province. What is a bit different today is the narrative that, if they were in government, they would look after the needs of Saskatchewan people better than this government does. Well, Mr. Speaker, let's remind them of the facts.

The last time the NDP were in government, they closed 52 hospitals, including one right here in Regina. And the NDP government had the worst doctor and nurse retention record in Canada. Between 2001 to 2006 the province lost 450 nurses and 173 doctors. The NDP government eliminated 12 long-term care beds. And under the NDP, Saskatchewan had the longest wait times in Canada, with thousands waiting a year or longer for surgery.

In stark contrast, since being elected in 2007, there are nearly 750 more doctors and 3,400 more nurses of all designations. And we are also training more doctors and nurses in Saskatchewan. The number of physician training seats has been increased by 40 and the number of training seats for nurses has increased by 300 since 2007. Also under the Saskatchewan Party government, we'll have built or are building 15 new long-term care homes. And in this budget, Mr. Speaker, there is an investment of 5.36 billion for the Ministry of Health, an increase of 2.9 per cent from 2017-2018.

Mr. Speaker, targeted funding will provide Saskatchewan people with improved access to mental health, palliative care, and community-based primary health care services, and provide universal coverage of HIV medications. Federal funding, Mr. Speaker, of 19.02 million to support the provincial Connected Care strategy, this investment builds on existing provincial spending on team-based community health services and primary health care for patients who may be best served in a home or community setting.

Additionally, federal and provincial funding of 11.4 million to improve community-based mental health services and supports for children, youth, and families; additional funding for key initiatives — 600,000 to provide universal drug coverage for HIV medications, \$50,000 for AIDS Saskatoon, and an additional \$50,000 for Saskatoon's Westside Clinic to provide additional HIV supports. A \$523,000 investment will create the new universal newborn hearing screening program.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite would have you think that if we were to blindly support this motion that the federal government would fund a national pharmacare plan. In my comments earlier, I think I . . . What happened with medicare is a pretty clear example of what would happen if we just blindly went ahead and supported this motion.

However, if you read the executive summary in the federal parliamentary report, the report states: "Given our federated

state, the committee believes that the program should be cost-shared between federal, provincial and territorial governments.” Again I ask, what share is that going to be? How much is the cost going to be for the province of Saskatchewan? How is it going to impact medically for the people of Saskatchewan? Are we actually going to end up worse? “. . . private drug plans and Canadians at large to identify the best possible approaches towards financing this new program.”

Mr. Speaker, one part I can agree with on the previous statement is that we need to undertake consultations as our first step, and that, Mr. Speaker, is how this motion should have read. And for that reason and many others, I can't find any reason to support this motion without having a lot more information. And so, Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear more information from the opposite side, but with this amount of information I cannot support their motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's disappointing to enter into such an important debate, see members on the other side not take a stand for their constituents, Mr. Speaker. What we're talking about here is something that allows us to get value for the people of our province and those that we serve. And the reality is that far too many of our constituents, each and every one of us, are having to make the choice between things like rent or food in the fridge or in the cupboard, or the medications that they so desperately need, Mr. Speaker. This hits those that are in a more vulnerable position, even harder, so many seniors that are put in this position, and it weakens the effectiveness of our health care system, Mr. Speaker.

Of course Canada is the only country with a universal health care system that doesn't offer prescription drug coverage. You know, and this oversight certainly results in unnecessary illness, worsening medical and health conditions, and it costs us billions of dollars, Mr. Speaker. And I know that sometimes we can't get the other side to do things for the right reasons when it comes to improving people's lives or improving well-being across our province. But I'd hope their attention would be grabbed by the billions of dollars that we could save Canadians. The dollars that we could save Saskatchewan people, Saskatchewan workers, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan seniors.

It's been clear that in other countries that have a universal health care system that when they have a universal prescription or drug coverage system, that they have economic clout in that system and they're able to drive much greater value in the purchase of the medications that people need to live and stay healthy to work, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've looked at the case of, you know, a country like New Zealand, as an example, that buys medications that we're paying . . . on pennies on the dollar, Mr. Speaker, forcing Saskatchewan people and Canadians to pay 10 and 20 times more for common medications that are essential to their well-being, essential to their quality of life, essential to their relationships and their happiness, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we have a discussion in this Assembly that we've been elevating, Mr. Speaker, calling for action to address

mental health and addiction services in our province — a system that's clearly broken and inadequate in serving people all through our province. Now an important part of that is the prescription side as well, Mr. Speaker. If those suffering and dealing with illness don't have the medications, aren't able to afford the medications that they need, then our system fails and there's a breakdown, Mr. Speaker.

[11:45]

We already fund a universal health care system. We already fund that visit to the doctor. We already visit that entry into the health care system, which is essential and something that we should be so proud of as Saskatchewan people, so proud of as Canadians. I know it's something I'm incredibly proud of as a CCF-NDPer [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party], Mr. Speaker. But we should be providing leadership to make sure that we ensure the effectiveness, the highest level of efficiency and effectiveness of that system by making sure that when somebody goes into the doctor — be it a young parent with their sick child; be it a worker that's dealing with mental health challenges; be it a senior, Mr. Speaker, that's dealing with diabetes — we should make sure that that person, that patient is able to access the prescriptions that they need.

We pay for the cost of going to see that doctor and of course we pay for the costs of their health worsening, of not responding to that illness. We pay for it when they show up in the emergency room. We pay for it when they show up at the highest level of cost for the system in through the hospital services, Mr. Speaker. What we should be doing is making sure we make our system as effective as possible by ensuring prescriptions for all.

You know, the evidence is strong on this front. Canadians and Saskatchewan people, Saskatchewan workers, Saskatchewan seniors, people living with disabilities, are getting gouged because of the absence of a national pharmacare system within our country. Our best way to respond, from my perspective, is as a nation. It gives us the greatest economic clout to go and negotiate the best prices on medications that Canadians need. I know that there's been assessments by independent offices and accountants and economists that talk about the billions of dollars that would be saved. I know that a 2015 study shows that universal drug coverage would save Canadians over \$7 billion and with little or no increase to government spending.

I want to touch on another factor. We have so many people that are working two and three jobs just to make ends meet, working in some of the most precarious environments and precarious roles throughout our province, not making much money at all, doing all they can to keep their head above water, doing all they can to put food in their fridge, doing all they can to pay rent or make mortgage payments, Mr. Speaker. Many of those workers don't have drug coverage. Many of those workers, when they need medications to ensure their health, they're not able to access those medications. And whether it be for a physical ailment, Mr. Speaker, or a chronic disease, or whether it's for mental health, our failure to properly treat those individuals certainly costs them, but it costs all of us. We're pulling workers, Mr. Speaker, away from our economy, away from their jobs. It translates into significant economic challenges at the household level.

We see right now within our province that we're leading the nation, sadly, when it comes to defaults on mortgage payments. That's a, you know, sort of a canary in the coal mine when it comes to an assessment of the economy and how it's working for Saskatchewan people. And when workers are pulled out of employment because they're injured and ill, it costs all of us. And they end up in our health care system at a much higher cost, Mr. Speaker.

So this was always the vision for our universal health care system, to step up and to insure prescriptions or medications for Canadians, for Saskatchewan people. It's on us to deliver that phase of medicare, and in doing so we provide greater well-being to all Saskatchewan people. We alleviate incredible financial pressure on so many where we bring about the ability for so many to heal and to get well, Mr. Speaker. And we save money for taxpayers. We save money for Canadians. We save money for workers while strengthening our economy, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm strongly in support of standing together here today in supporting the motion. I'm disappointed that members opposite would take such weak, unprincipled, weak positions, weak positions, Mr. Speaker, in standing up for their constituents. And certainly we should be doing all we can to urge the federal government to step up and to fund, with the involvement of provinces, a national pharmacare system across our country.

We see other provinces stepping up and looking at doing this themselves, and that's an option. But of course economics dictate that our ability to build the most effective, affordable system with the greatest level of economic clout and impact is by doing that as a nation, Mr. Speaker.

So I implore members opposite who took to their feet, Mr. Speaker, here today to not . . . that didn't stand up for their constituents and for our province or for our health system, to reconsider their positions. And I'm proud to stand with this official opposition and the Saskatchewan NDP in pushing for a national pharmacare system.

And I just, you know, I just am motivated by the story after story of worker after worker, constituent after constituent, senior after senior who's been forced to be into that position of making the choice between the food that they need or the prescriptions that they also need, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter into this debate today and I look forward to the questions to come.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Martensville.

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to enter into the debate today. I find it interesting that the very last thing that the member opposite had accused us of in his statements was that we weren't standing up for our constituents when it comes to health care. Well I would beg to differ with that assessment, Mr. Speaker. One of my colleagues outlined the horrible record in health care under the NDP before 2007. And I think we've made some marked improvements, whether you look at recruiting nurses to our province, and the amount of nurses that we have here — more than in 2007; increasing training seats for doctors; building hospitals instead of closing

them.

I think we've probably, I dare say, done more for our constituents when it comes to health care than the NDP did their last go at government. And I would suggest the best thing that we can do for our constituents is to continue to earn their trust so that this party stays in government. Because heaven forbid the NDP get back in because we know exactly what they would do if they had the opportunity in government again, Mr. Speaker. So I take great exception to that.

I do find it interesting that the Leader of the Opposition was participating in private members' day during the 75-minute debate. I checked with some of my colleagues who have been here a little bit longer than I have and none of us ever remember that happening. So obviously they're seized with this issue, and fair point. I talked to the Health minister yesterday and he's committed to continuing to engage with the federal government and have discussions on this. But as my colleagues who have already spoken have stated, the motion before us today is asking us to support something that is an unknown. So we'll continue to have those discussions with the federal government going forward, but obviously we've got some concerns.

We've seen over the last several years . . . Health funding used to be funded by about 50 per cent by the federal government; it's down to 20. So obviously there's going to be some concern amongst provinces, what their funding levels will continue to be. You know, they could promise something at the very beginning and then reduce that funding going forward or drop it altogether. I sat on treasury board for many years and I've heard more than one ministry come forward saying that the federal government is cutting funding to a specific program and we have to discuss whether or not we're going to backfill those. So federal government does not have a great track record in this respect so that would obviously be a big concern to us.

And there was a list of other questions that my colleagues have already talked about, so I'm not going to go back and rehash those. But, Mr. Speaker, as I said, considering that the NDP leader was participating in this debate today, they are obviously seized with this as very important. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, there are other issues facing our province today that are equally, and in most cases probably very timely for us to be discussing, and perhaps we should be discussing those.

I would encourage the NDP to perhaps bring forward a motion — I don't know, Mr. Speaker — defending our province against a federally imposed carbon tax. That might be something that we could get behind if they wanted to do that. But, Mr. Speaker, we know that the NDP are firmly in support of a carbon tax, except perhaps the member for Saskatoon Fairview who denied that in committee on Monday. So good on her for breaking ranks with her party on this.

Mr. Speaker, they want us to wave the white flag and sign on to the federal carbon tax so that we get \$62 million in infrastructure funding at a cost of \$4 billion to our economy. Only the NDP would see that as good math, Mr. Speaker. It's NDP math. It doesn't make any sense that we would undertake an activity, a tax on our province that would cripple our industry so we get \$62 million in infrastructure funding. It doesn't make any sense.

They ridicule our attempts to defend Saskatchewan's interests. We made the announcement yesterday that we're taking this to the Court of Appeal in Saskatchewan to see if they even have the constitutional ability to impose this tax on Saskatchewan. We believe that they do not. And we would hope, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP would be seized with this issue, that they would stand with us instead of, Mr. Speaker, abdicating their responsibility. They talk about standing up for constituents. How about they stand up for their constituents on this?

The Leader of the Opposition said, and I quote, when it comes to this court challenge, "This is going to be an effort that is expensive and, worse, risky." Well, Mr. Speaker, I would submit that what's going to be expensive to our province is an NDP carbon tax that they want to impose on us, and that they're fully supportive of Trudeau implementing a carbon tax on us. That's what's going to be expensive for our province.

What's going to be risky for our province is not a government-sponsored court challenge on the constitutionality of a Trudeau carbon tax. What's risky is a carbon tax being imposed upon us, Mr. Speaker. It's a \$4 billion hit to our province. It hits our resource industry, costing jobs, the very good-paying, mortgage-paying jobs that the NDP are always talking about. It is those very people that the NDP say they want to defend who will be affected by this. So why are they not standing up with us on this point, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . They will. We'll just leave them behind. And if they want to stand up and they don't want to get behind our court challenge, that's fine.

But how about another topic? How about Kinder Morgan and pipelines? They say in this Chamber that they want to support pipelines. They're even cheering from their seats on this position, Mr. Speaker. Well then, riddle me this: when their federal leader comes out and says that there should be no pipelines anywhere because it increases our capacity to produce oil, where are they then? Have they come out publicly against their federal leader to stand up for Saskatchewan? It's been crickets. There hasn't been one peep from them publicly asking their federal leader to stand down from his damaging position that would ruin our economy.

Their leader said — well now they're beaking from their seats because they don't want to talk about this — their federal leader said, and I quote, ". . . we must oppose the proposed expansion of the Kinder Morgan pipeline and the building of the Energy East pipeline" because it significantly increases oil production and international oil exports. Well heaven forbid we export our oil outside of our country, Mr. Speaker.

Do you think they could be seized with this issue and stand up with us and against their federal leader? No, not happening. Mr. Speaker, it's easier for them to say things in here. We know that there's not a lot of people watching the legislative channel or reading *Hansard*. I think we do it. I know the Environment minister and I do that on a regular basis because once a researcher, always a researcher. But apparently the NDP federally think they're all on the same big team.

Peter Julian, during the last leadership debate said, and I quote, "We have a situation . . ." And this is on Kinder Morgan: "We have a situation where British Columbians have said no. We

have the federal caucus who has said no. There is a very clear consensus amongst New Democrats."

Well apparently this little group of NDPers are not in consensus with their federal group, so stand up for Saskatchewan and go tell them that. Have we heard anything? No. Mr. Speaker, they don't even have to talk to their federal leader. All they have to do is go talk to their provincial buddy over in BC [British Columbia], their brothers and sisters in British Columbia and go, hey, John Horgan, you know what you're doing to Saskatchewan? You're hurting our economy. You're hurting our industries. You're hurting our export capabilities. Have they had that conversation? No.

But you know what they did have, Mr. Speaker, was a big fat contribution from John Horgan to their leadership campaign. Well if they're going to stand up for Saskatchewan and say that our interests are that important, why don't they just send the money back and say, thanks but no thanks? They want to take big money out of politics. They don't want out-of-province contributions coming in here. They don't want contributions from people that we don't know coming into Saskatchewan. Why? Because it causes undue influence on the political process. Well if that's their position — no out-of-province money, causes undue influence — then give back John Horgan's money.

So, Mr. Speaker, if they want to stand up for us, they could do a whole bunch of things. They could have these conversations here today. They could stand up with us to defend Saskatchewan against the carbon tax. They could stand against their federal leader on his plan to destroy pipelines in this country. And they could stand up against John Horgan and the BC NDP who are trying to destroy Western Canadian economy by wanting to shut down oil industry in Alberta and Saskatchewan. If they want to stand up for Saskatchewan, do that instead of waving the white flag.

[12:00]

The Deputy Speaker: — The time for debate has expired. Before we move into questions, I would simply offer this comment to members in future 75-minute debates: that debates on a motion, the comments should be relevant to the motion. I would simply caution members that they may want to talk to the motion.

With that, we go for questions. I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite's solution to most things is to start another Crown corporation. Well we know how that's worked in the past. We have SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company], Big Sky. I don't think those ring a bell to the members opposite.

Now the new leader wishes to open up an additional Crown corporation, SaskPharm, within his additional \$2.5 billion spending spree every year. Potatoes, pigs, and now prescriptions. My question is to the member from Saskatoon Meewasin: in your plan to afford all this, which taxes will you raise?

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, the confusion that reigns on that side around Crown corporations continues to be evident. Crown corporations are not a source of increased tax dollars that we have to spend. They're a big source of revenue. And what this government likes to talk about when they talk about Crown corporations, what they like to talk about is how to shut them down.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2017 when the parliamentary budget officer estimated how much would be saved on prescriptions if Canadians were covered by these cheaper provincial drug plans, he concluded it would be \$4.2 billion annually. What part does . . . To the member from Westview: does he support saving taxpayers' dollars and spending smarter when it comes to health care?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Westview.

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, we will engage in discussions and fully collaborate with the federal government for all the work that's been undertaken already to create a national pharmacare plan. However, we cannot support this motion until we have a clear indication that the federal government will not only be a full funding partner but will also enact a plan that in no way diminishes Saskatchewan's drug plan, currently one of the most comprehensive drug plans in Canada. I mean in Saskatchewan 48 per cent of the cost is covered by this province, the highest in Canada. New Brunswick is 29 per cent, so a significant difference. So why would we want to go away from a good plan we already have? 1,400 drugs are in our drug formulary, which is a 36 per cent increase since 2007. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would again like to commend this government for the record investment . . . [inaudible] . . . In this year's budget, it was announced that targeting funding would be provided to Saskatchewan people, including universal coverage for HIV medications. It is a shame, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite all voted against this investment. They claim to stand alongside the vulnerable people of Saskatchewan but do not support investment and improvement to our health care system. My question is for the member from Saskatchewan Riversdale: why did you vote against universal HIV coverage?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, that is one of the most laughable questions I've ever heard in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. We voted against a budget that hurts people here in Saskatchewan, that didn't provide a vision for the people of Saskatchewan. Totally supportive of that particular measure,

Mr. Speaker, but one item or a couple of items in an otherwise incredibly disappointing budget can't be supported.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — You know, Mr. Speaker, we have the opportunity to represent people in this Assembly, and this was a chance to do the right thing for our constituents, the people of our province, save money and save lives. My question to the member for Saskatoon Westview: of course he has untold millions of dollars for the GTH scandal, it seems limited interest in a GTH inquiry, but no interest in standing up for a national pharmacare plan that would save money and lives. How does he explain those priorities to his constituents?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Westview.

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, we understand that the costs of prescription medications can be a financial burden for individuals and families. And we take that seriously on this side of the House. That's why 1,400 drugs on the drug plan covered and we cover 48 per cent here in Saskatchewan, the best in Canada. You know, we have to remember that there's a lot of good things that we already have in this plan, so why would we change it to a plan we know nothing about? There's hardly any information for us to go on. And so Saskatchewan's drug plan offers comprehensive coverage to residents, one of the best in the country, and benefits are targeted to people who need them the most and to drug therapies that are the most effective. And the public share, as I talked about already, is 48 per cent here in Saskatchewan. That's the highest in Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Pasqua.

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our government will fully co-operate with the federal government on a pharmaceutical plan, although our support would hinge on its ability to better support the people of this province. The member opposite is willing to support the plan that the federal government has not yet established, with no idea what it may entail, how it would impact our province.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from Saskatoon Riversdale. How can you support a plan that you have never seen, one that could be less comprehensive than what we already have?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With all due respect, I'm not sure what part of "universal" those members opposite don't understand. I'd encourage them all to reread the motion because none of their questions seem to show that they actually understand the motion. I'd like to read the motion into the record:

That this Assembly calls upon the federal government to

move beyond words and fully fund a national pharmacare strategy [fully fund, Mr. Speaker, a national pharmacare strategy] so that all Canadians will be able to afford their prescription drugs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, I have to say that it's disappointing to see members mock someone's voice, especially somebody who's been dealing with an illness. That's really unacceptable.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the question that I would like to ask is what the member just referenced. We heard from a number of these members that they're worried that a comprehensive, universal pharmacare system would somehow be less than the coverage we're currently getting. Well would these members step up and join us in asking for what we're asking for, for what the motion says, a fully funded universal pharmacare system? I ask that question to the member for Saskatoon Martensville . . . or Martensville.

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

Ms. Heppner: — Not Saskatoon Martensville, but maybe the constituency boundaries will change yet again.

Mr. Speaker, as I said at the very beginning of my remarks, I had spoken with the Health minister and the Minister for Rural and Remote Health, and they will continue to be engaged with the federal government on this discussion, Mr. Speaker, and going forward, to make sure that if something is put in place that there's support across the country, that all provinces are participating, that funding is fully funded by the federal government, Mr. Speaker. We don't have any of the answers to those questions right now.

And in the meantime, Mr. Speaker, the drug plans that we have in place and the drug coverage in Saskatchewan is very good. They are wide-ranging to various groups of people, Mr. Speaker. And I would point out that of the 1,400 drugs listed on Saskatchewan's formulary, there are 36 per cent more today than there were in 2007.

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

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite have been quick to side with the federal government over the people of Saskatchewan on a number of issues, the carbon tax being the most significant. This province's drug plan is already one of the best in Canada, with public share of total prescription drug spending being 48 per cent. My question is to the member from Regina Rosemont: if a national pharmacare program is less comprehensive than our current program, will members opposite still support it?

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The member maybe read the question without being engaged in listening to the conversation or reading the motion, but our push is for a universal, comprehensive, national pharmacare plan, Mr. Speaker, fully funded. And of course, in doing so we save billions of dollars for Canadians who are being gouged on medications. In doing so we make sure that Canadians and Saskatchewan people get the medications that they so deserve. We save dollars and we save lives.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2007 . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Time for the 75-minute debate has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 2 — Opposition's Fiscal Plan

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Mr. Nerlien.]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to join into the debate on the motion proposed by our member from Kelvington-Wadena, in the motion that states:

That this Assembly rejects the NDP's plan to increase spending by over \$2.5 billion, as it would leave Saskatchewan with an extreme deficit and increase the debt for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, I think today I would like to begin with just a few comments about some of the items outlined in the recent campaign platform outlined by the now Leader of the NDP Party opposite. And I had the very great honour I think, Mr. Speaker, of being the minister responsible for Advanced Education for a brief time, something which I enjoyed greatly. And I would just like to look at a couple of the issues from this campaign platform.

One of the first things that is outlined there that caught my attention, Mr. Speaker, was reverse the cuts made to our post-secondary partners. Well, Mr. Speaker, firstly, I would just like to say how much we've appreciated the efforts of our post-secondary partners in holding the line on expenses and making the necessary efficiency changes that were needed to ensure that our students, our young people in this province, continue to get a great education at an affordable rate, Mr. Speaker.

And you're going to hear me say many times here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, that there's been really no concrete numbers proposed in this plan, in this campaign platform. No

way to pay for it. No itemized costs, Mr. Speaker. So we're going to have to make some assumptions. But I think in this situation we could assume that restoring funding would be about \$44 million. But, Mr. Speaker, let's do a little comparison here, and some days, Mr. Speaker, I think hypocrisy seems to abound in this hallowed Chamber, but I'll just talk a little bit about tuition rates here.

Since '14-15 budget, under this government, Mr. Speaker, tuition rates have risen by an average of 4 per cent at our universities, and only once during that period of time was it higher than 4 per cent, at 4.3 per cent. Now, Mr. Speaker, let's compare that to what happened under the dark days of that NDP government. And he talks about stable tuition rates in this platform. Mr. Speaker, from '90-91 to '06-07, our undergraduate tuition rates at both of our universities — the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina — went up by a staggering 227 per cent, Mr. Speaker. At Sask Poly, which was then SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] of course at that time, it was even worse. It went up by . . . Tuition rates rose in that period of time by 320 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, this platform, this plan also wants to see more government funding for our universities. Well fair enough, Mr. Speaker. But again we have to figure out where that's going to come from.

[12:15]

But here is what's happening today. Here's the facts, Mr. Speaker. Our Government of Saskatchewan funding for the University of Saskatchewan presently accounts for about 63 per cent of their total revenue. And, Mr. Speaker, that's the fifth highest in the country of comparable universities, 15 comparable universities of the medical doctoral universities.

And, Mr. Speaker, three of those four universities that receive higher funding than ours does are in the province of Quebec. And, Mr. Speaker, we know where the province of Quebec gets its funding — from equalization payments. Their equalization payments last year, Mr. Speaker, almost totalled as much as what our total budget here is in the province of Saskatchewan.

Same story, Mr. Speaker, at the University of Regina. Fifty-five per cent of their revenue comes from the Government of Saskatchewan and that's the fourth highest of the 14 comparable universities. That's the comprehensive universities, Mr. Speaker.

This campaign plan, this plan also proposes that we would throw out the grad retention program. Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that our grad retention program was one of the most substantial and the most successful in anywhere in the country. And if he wants to take this plan, this idea to 70,000 grads who have taken advantage of this program and have accessed \$406 million in tax savings in order to stay here in the province and work in the province, I think they would have some strong messages for him with that plan.

Mr. Speaker, he suggests doing this, throwing out our grad retention program, in order to lower our tuition rates to the lowest in Western Canada. Well, Mr. Speaker, if we use the

figures from Statistics Canada, for example, Manitoba has the lowest tuition rates in Western Canada. So let's use Manitoba's rates. And if we did that, Mr. Speaker, it would cost the province of Saskatchewan another \$127 million. So even if we subtracted the \$90 million that he scraps the grad retention program, that still leaves \$36.7 million for the taxpayers of this province to pick up, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this platform, this plan talks about a stable cash flow for our College of Medicine, Mr. Speaker. And our College of Medicine certainly is perhaps the flagship of our University of Saskatchewan. It's so vitally important to continue to train doctors who will provide medical service, medical attention for the residents of our province, and certainly we appreciate the value.

But, Mr. Speaker, here's what we've been doing for our College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan. And yes, they have had accreditation problems in the past, and they have now resolved them. But at their most recent accreditation review, which was late last fall, they came to us in mid-year, in summertime, and requested \$20 million to help meet those accreditation review. We reviewed their request, Mr. Speaker, and we were happy to be able to provide \$20 million in funding. That was on top of the 67 million that was already in the '17-18 budget, Mr. Speaker, and again this year in our '18-19 budget we have allotted \$89 million for the College of Medicine. Mr. Speaker, that's stable funding. That is stable funding.

Mr. Speaker, this plan, this platform also goes on to make many suggestions for our farmers and our agriculture industry in this province, things like encourage fuel-efficient machinery, fuel-efficient purchases of tractors and combines. Well I happen to know a lot of farmers in this province, Mr. Speaker, and I don't think there's a one of them that would go out and buy a tractor that would use more fuel than what's necessary.

I don't think we should be trying to tell our farmers how to make their choices, how to decide what crops to choose. The farmers, I think, are the best ones to make those decisions. They're going to make the management decisions that are best for their business, and they know what's best. They are in fact the best stewards of the land in this province and they will continue to be the best stewards because they have a vested interest in that land, Mr. Speaker.

They'll make the crop choices that not only increase their bottom line and ensure their sustainability, but in fact the choices that they're making with some things like they've done in recent years, like zero till, like moving to pulse crops, has actually resulted in a huge CO₂ sink in our province, Mr. Speaker, to the tune of about 12 million tonnes.

Something that I might add, that our federal counterparts, Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister McKenna give us no credit for, Mr. Speaker — we're getting no credit for the carbon sinks that are being allocated in our farm industries. As well, they don't even want to give us credit for what's being done at Boundary dam 3, similar to what our NDP across the way talks about, Mr. Speaker, sequestering carbon each and every day that it's running.

And, Mr. Speaker, here's one that really sticks out in my mind,

and I'm not sure just where this came from, but it could cost as much as \$18.1 million. And that was a proposal in this plan to pay farmers to quit using chemicals, to quit using fertilizers, to quit using sprays and to go organic. Well, Mr. Speaker, again I think farmers can best make these choices.

But let's take a look at some facts, Mr. Speaker. In Saskatchewan there's presently approximately 850 certified organic producers, and that accounts for about 2.5 per cent of all farms in this province. So again we have to make an assumption. We don't know what this plan, what this platform was proposing, but let's say the plan was to double the number of organic farms in this province. So that would be another 900 farms. And again, if we have to use some figures that are available to us today, if we use the figures from Quebec, from their conversion to organic program which provided \$20,000 per farm, if you take that \$20,000 per farm for the 900 farmers, that's another \$18 million that the taxpayers of this province are going to have to come up with.

Another plank in this very shaky platform and in this plan suggests that we should provide support for small farms and young farmers. So again, Mr. Speaker, this is full of assumptions, but let's take a look at 2016 stats for a moment. At that time there were approximately 4,400 farmers in this province under the age of 35. So if we were to assume that . . . I don't know for sure, but is he saying we're going to give them each \$10,000 to keep operating? I don't know. And if we had a 50 per cent uptake on that, that's going to cost us \$22 million, Mr. Speaker, to the taxpayers of this province. And as mentioned earlier, I think leave the farming decision up to the farmers. They're the stewards of the land. They're going to make the decisions that are best for their farming operations and indeed, best for this province and best for the environment.

This plan also goes on to say that they want to see agriculture innovation commitments. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we can already tick that box. In our last budget we provided \$25.78 million for just that, Mr. Speaker. And this year we've announced a new ag tax incentive for value-added agriculture production. That's our commitment for our ag community, our agriculture producers in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And now I would just like to continue with a few comments about the platform regarding education, Mr. Speaker. This plan suggests that we should be doing more. How much more? We don't really know. It didn't say in that plan. But let's make an assumption again here. In '17-18 we invested seventy-nine and a quarter million dollars in early years funding. So if he's suggesting a 10 per cent increase in that funding, there's another \$7.9 million.

As well, this platform outlines developing affordable early childhood education programming. What does that mean? Well let's use the Quebec model again. At \$7 a day of cost, amounts to \$9,000 per child in that province. Here in Saskatchewan we have 15,200 licensed daycare spaces, government-funded, at approximately \$3,700 per space for a total of \$56 million. If we were to move to even a \$15-a-day cap, that would cost us another \$40 million that would be paid for by the taxpayers in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this platform suggests that we roll out a nutritious

lunch program for our students in this province. Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess I would have to inform them that this program has been in effect in the province for 28 years. This year alone, Mr. Speaker, already we have provided \$2.3 million and have provided 8 million meals already this year for our students. So what's the plan here? Expand it by 20 per cent? Expand it by 10 per cent? What is he proposing? Even if it went at 10 per cent, Mr. Speaker, it's another \$230,000.

As well, he talks about . . . This plan talks about investing in libraries. '16-17 funding, we provided \$12.768 million, so if we assume a 10 per cent increase again, another \$1 million.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this plan expresses concern for our environment, which this side of the government is very concerned with as well, and should we all be. And it suggests spending dollars to promote resilient farming methods. Well I talked about that a little earlier, Mr. Speaker. We have 40 per cent of the arable land in this nation, Mr. Speaker. Our zero-till techniques, which have evolved over the last, let's say 10, 15 years, has resulted in about 12 million tonnes a year of carbon sinks into our soil. Mr. Speaker, another 21 million acres of grasslands, wetlands, forests, also account for sinks. Pulse growing in this province accounts for another 2 million tonnes, Mr. Speaker.

We also provide in '17-18 that \$25.78 million I talked about for ag research programming. Farmers best know what they can do with their land. They're the long-term tenants of that land.

Mr. Speaker, if I can just take a bit of an aside here. In my previous career as a realtor, I often had investors come to me and want to invest money and ask where I thought would be a good spot to put it. Would it be in a strip mall or in an apartment building or a fourplex? My advice to them was, very often, use the money to buy a quarter section of land, buy a half section of land. Rent it back to a farmer. You have one tenant to work with. The tenant pays cash or pays a crop share. He has a vested interest in looking after that land because he's going to use the land next year and continue to make money. And I think that holds true for a lot of things in the ag industry. Farmers are the best stewards and they have the best knowledge of what's . . . [inaudible].

This plan outlined in this platform also advocates establishing a new Saskatchewan transportation company. Well we better look at some facts here, Mr. Speaker, because there wasn't any in this proposal. Since 1980, Mr. Speaker, on our old STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company], ridership declined by 77 per cent. It declined by 35 per cent since '12. Last year of its operation, ridership dropped by 9 per cent, another 18,000 rides. Since '07 the subsidy per ride at that bus company rose from \$25 to \$94. And in fact, 1978 was the last year that STC returned any profit back to the taxpayer of this province.

This plan, this campaign plan, they seem to feel that \$10 million would restart STC. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm guessing that they haven't bought many buses lately and they haven't built many service garages and they haven't built many customer service stations. So I think that's not even realistic. I think if we took a more realistic . . . It's going to cost us at least \$50 million to reinstate STC. Plus if we look at 85 million that it may cost us over the next five years to run, that's a \$125 million difference,

Mr. Speaker.

And if you look at that and break that down at an annual cost of \$17 million to run that bus company again, and that's, Mr. Speaker, take note, that's only running it for half of the province. It was only servicing half of this province at that time to begin with. So I'm not sure. Are they going to make the decision on which town, which community would get a bus? Or would they provide it for the whole province? And that would drive up the 17 million cost. But even if you look at the \$17 million that the STC was losing — write that down — that's about \$46,000 per day. That \$46,000 will pay for a lot of teachers, a lot of doctors, a lot of nurses in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the platform also suggested changes to municipal revenue sharing. And again as I said earlier, hypocrisy abounds here, Mr. Speaker. And I would like to say prior to our party having the honour of forming government, there was no predictable funding for municipal revenue sharing.

[12:30]

We heard from our municipal partners. They asked, and we responded. They wanted stable funding. In '07-08, revenue sharing amounted to \$127 million for all of our municipal partners. This year it's up by a whopping 89 per cent, to \$241.1 million in revenue sharing. That's what we've done for the municipalities in our province . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . That's right. He suggests that we should use one point of all PST. That would amount to a cost of another \$80 million to our taxpayers, Mr. Speaker. Where is that money coming from? Nothing outlined here.

Again we've heard quite a bit of conversation today in our 75-minute debate about this plan's proposal for pharmacare. But was that costed out? Have we seen any numbers? I haven't seen any numbers. Presently in Saskatchewan, the total cost of drugs is approximately \$600 million. The drug plan covered about \$330 million of that amount. So if we were to pay all 100 per cent, that would amount to another \$270 million. Again, Mr. Speaker, that's got to be picked up by the taxpayers.

He wants coverage, this plan wants coverage for all HIV meds. Well, Mr. Speaker, again we can check that box. One hundred per cent cost equalling some \$700,000 covered in our health budget this year.

Mr. Speaker, I think there are some glaring omissions in this plan, and I'd just like to mention a couple of them here. First of all, I saw nothing in this plan about capital investments. The plan outlines approximately \$2.5 billion in expenses, but then if you add to it some of the things that we proposed in our most recent budget — things like \$1.5 billion for infrastructure in our Crown corporations, another \$1.2 billion for the Sask Builds capital plan — not here, Mr. Speaker.

Health infrastructure spending, one item alone, \$34 million for the Sask Hospital, North Battleford — something that is very, very important to me and to all residents of this province, but certainly residents of the Battlefords.

\$214 million for highway upgrades and safety projects. Several passing lanes, great safety factor, and that including Highway

No. 4 between North Battleford and Cochin, something that we've been asking for for many, many years. And it's going to be a great addition to a very, very busy highway.

\$18 million in transfers to municipal infrastructure for municipal roads, urban connector program, community airports. And just on the side here, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to mention last year we received \$275,000 for repaving of our North Battleford Cameron McIntosh Airport. That airport's very important to the whole part of Northwest. It not only serves The Battlefords but it serves all the Northwest — oil exploration up in that area, mining exploration, farm population. Very important.

Second admission, Mr. Speaker, no indication here where the dollars are going to come from. They always ask, many, many times in this House, where did all our dollars go? Well I've just outlined a few things where our dollars go. They go to invest in infrastructure for the future. They've gone to taking 112,000 people right off the tax rolls altogether, saved them literally billions of dollars in tax savings. But you know, where does the money come from for all of these promises? I'd like to know where. And on top of all of this, Mr. Speaker, he favours a carbon tax to impose on the province of Saskatchewan which is going to even cripple our economy even more and lower the amount of tax dollars that are available.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to wrap up here momentarily, but I would just like to say that I am proud of the strong leadership in our Saskatchewan Party that they've shown to this province, turning our province from a have-not to a have province in the good times, and then formulating a sustainable plan to carry us through these challenging times. This has shown the most important qualities of strong leadership — clear-headedness; the ability to formulate a work plan, and it's a workable work plan, Mr. Speaker; and the courage to carry out that plan. To keep your head when all about you are losing theirs, that's what strong leadership is about, Mr. Speaker. Most importantly, it's about accountability.

I'd just like to wrap up by saying, Mr. Speaker, my wife, Linda, and I have three great kids that we are very proud of. And they've got three great spouses that we're also proud of. And I would like to say they're all employed here in the province of Saskatchewan, and they're paying taxes, Mr. Speaker. And I think even, with no disrespect to my kids but even more important, we've got five beautiful grandkids.

And, Mr. Speaker, I stand here in this House today and say that I will do everything in my power to ensure that a party, a leader that proposes such loosey-goosey ideas with no plan to pay for them will never ever be able to form government. I will not have my children getting up in the morning and going to work knowing that at the end of the day, the government's going to have their hand in their pocket to take half of that back to pay for such ill-founded, ill-planned program as this.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to now adjourn debate on this motion.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

The Deputy Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved that the House adjourns. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. This House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:36.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COMMEMORATIVE STATEMENTS

National Day of Mourning

Morgan	4061
Rancourt	4061

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker	4061
-------------------	------

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker	4061
Duncan	4062
Forbes	4062
Rancourt	4065
Morgan	4065

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Beck	4062
Nerlien	4062
Sarauer	4062
Chartier	4063

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Nipawin Hawks Win Canalta Cup

Bradshaw	4063
----------------	------

Day of Mourning

Rancourt	4063
----------------	------

Provincial Game Management Plan

D'Autremont	4063
-------------------	------

Project Lifesaver Implemented in Saskatoon

Chartier	4064
----------------	------

2018 Tony Cote Winter Games

Doke	4064
------------	------

2017 Saskatoon Citizen of the Year

Lambert	4064
---------------	------

Support for Government Position on Carbon Pricing

Heppner	4065
---------------	------

QUESTION PERIOD

Support for Post-Secondary Institutes

Meili	4065
Moe	4066
Beaudry-Mellor	4066

Former Member and Irrigation Project Approval Process

Meili	4066
Duncan	4066

Global Transportation Hub and Land Transactions

Sproule	4067
Morgan	4067

Global Transportation Hub and Government Transparency

Sproule	4067
Harrison	4067

Mental Health Services for Children

Chartier	4068
Ottenbreit	4068

Support for Capital Infrastructure in the Education Sector

Beck	4069
Wyant	4069

Commercial Development in Wascana Park

McCall	4069
Cheveldayoff	4069

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Need for Pharmacare

Chartier	4070, 4080
Wilson	4073
Meili	4074, 4080
Buckingham	4075, 4080

Wotherspoon	4077, 4080
Heppner	4078, 4081
Bonk	4079
Bradshaw	4080
Fiaz	4080
Lambert	4081

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 2 — Opposition's Fiscal Plan

Cox	4081
------------------	------

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Scott Moe

Premier

President of the Executive Council

Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Tina Beaudry-Mellor

Minister of Advanced Education
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Minister Responsible for Innovation

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff

Minister of Central Services
Minister Responsible for the Provincial
Capital Commission
Minister Responsible for Public Service Commission

Hon. Dustin Duncan

Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Water
Security Agency
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation

Hon. Bronwyn Eyre

Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation

Hon. Joe Hargrave

Minister of Crown Investments
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company

Hon. Donna Harpauer

Minister of Finance

Hon. Jeremy Harrison

Minister of Trade and Export Development
Minister of Immigration and Career Training

Hon. Warren Kaeding

Minister of Government Relations
Minister Responsible for First Nations, Métis
and Northern Affairs

Hon. Gene Makowsky

Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor
and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan

Hon. David Marit

Minister of Highways and Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for SaskBuilds and
Priority Saskatchewan

Hon. Paul Merriman

Minister of Social Services

Hon. Don Morgan

Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan
Workers' Compensation Board
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Telecommunications

Hon. Greg Ottenbreit

Minister Responsible for Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Jim Reiter

Minister of Health

Hon. Lyle Stewart

Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Crop
Insurance Corporation

Hon. Christine Tell

Minister of Corrections and Policing
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

Hon. Gordon Wyant

Deputy Premier
Minister of Education