



THIRD SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

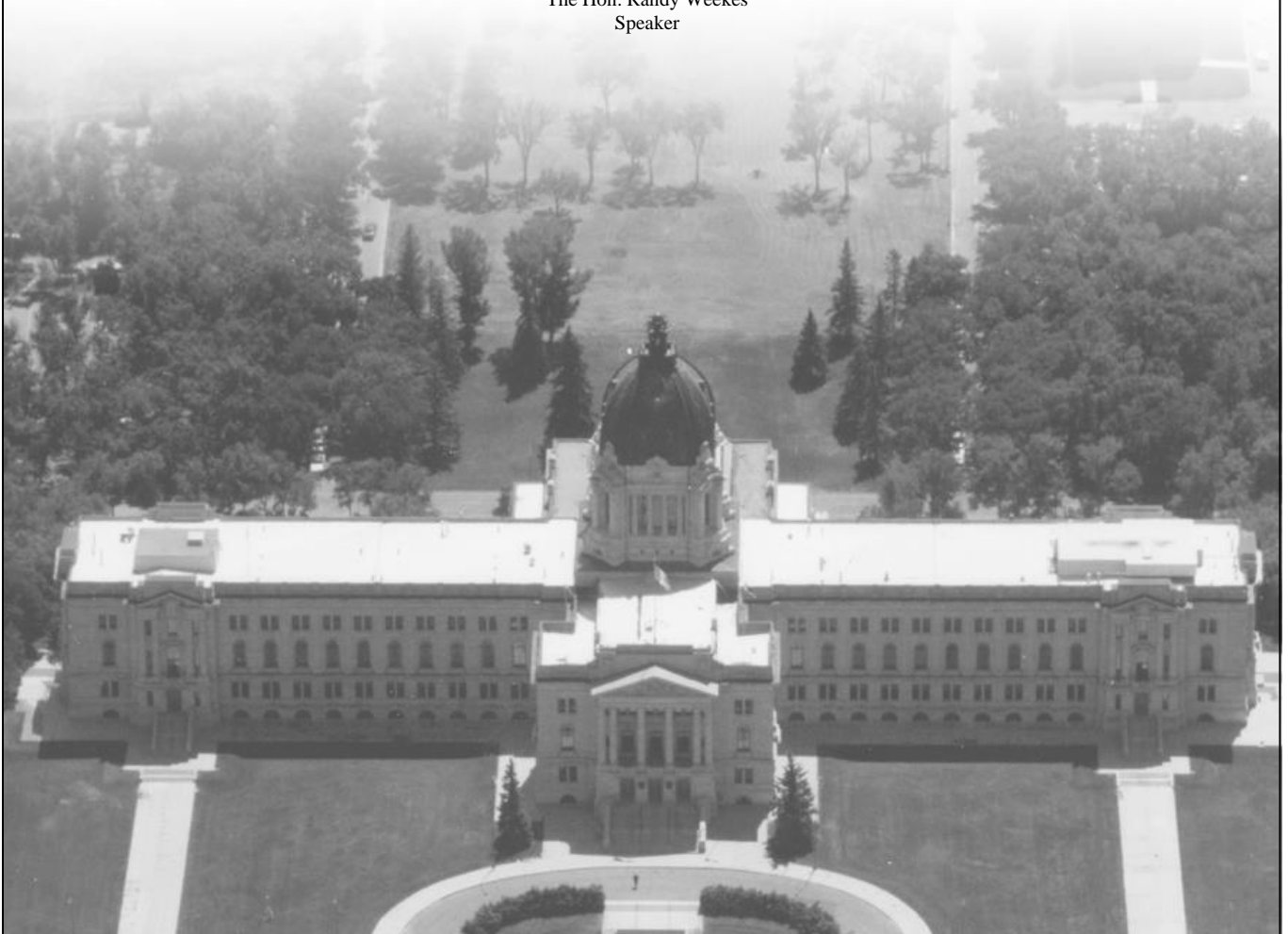
**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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**DEBATES  
AND  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)  
Published under the  
authority of  
The Hon. Randy Weekes  
Speaker



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**  
**3rd Session — 29th Legislature**

**Lieutenant Governor** — His Honour the Honourable Russ Mirasty, S.O.M., M.S.M.

**Speaker** — Hon. Randy Weekes  
**Premier** — Hon. Scott Moe  
**Leader of the Opposition** — Carla Beck

<b>Beck, Carla</b> — Regina Lakeview (NDP)	<b>Makowsky, Hon. Gene</b> — Regina Gardiner Park (SP)
<b>Bonk, Steven</b> — Moosomin (SP)	<b>Marit, Hon. David</b> — Wood River (SP)
<b>Bowes, Jennifer</b> — Saskatoon University (NDP)	<b>McLeod, Hon. Tim</b> — Moose Jaw North (SP)
<b>Bradshaw, Fred</b> — Carrot River Valley (SP)	<b>McMorris, Hon. Don</b> — Indian Head-Milestone (SP)
<b>Buckingham, David</b> — Saskatoon Westview (SP)	<b>Merriman, Hon. Paul</b> — Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland (SP)
<b>Carr, Hon. Lori</b> — Estevan (SP)	<b>Meyers, Derek</b> — Regina Walsh Acres (SP)
<b>Cheveldayoff, Ken</b> — Saskatoon Willowgrove (SP)	<b>Moe, Hon. Scott</b> — Rosthern-Shellbrook (SP)
<b>Cockrill, Hon. Jeremy</b> — The Battlefords (SP)	<b>Morgan, Hon. Don</b> — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)
<b>Conway, Meara</b> — Regina Elphinstone-Centre (NDP)	<b>Mowat, Vicki</b> — Saskatoon Fairview (NDP)
<b>Dennis, Terry</b> — Canora-Pelly (SP)	<b>Nerlien, Hugh</b> — Kelvington-Wadena (SP)
<b>Domotor, Ryan</b> — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)	<b>Nippi-Albright, Betty</b> — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)
<b>Duncan, Hon. Dustin</b> — Weyburn-Big Muddy (SP)	<b>Ottenbreit, Greg</b> — Yorkton (SP)
<b>Eyre, Hon. Bronwyn</b> — Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota (SP)	<b>Reiter, Hon. Jim</b> — Rosetown-Elrose (SP)
<b>Fiaz, Muhammad</b> — Regina Pasqua (SP)	<b>Ritchie, Erika</b> — Saskatoon Nutana (NDP)
<b>Francis, Ken</b> — Kindersley (SP)	<b>Ross, Alana</b> — Prince Albert Northcote (SP)
<b>Friesen, Marv</b> — Saskatoon Riversdale (SP)	<b>Ross, Hon. Laura</b> — Regina Rochdale (SP)
<b>Goudy, Todd</b> — Melfort (SP)	<b>Sarauer, Nicole</b> — Regina Douglas Park (NDP)
<b>Grewal, Gary</b> — Regina Northeast (SP)	<b>Skoropad, Hon. Dana</b> — Arm River (SP)
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<b>Harpauer, Hon. Donna</b> — Humboldt-Watrous (SP)	<b>Teed, Nathaniel</b> — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)
<b>Harrison, Daryl</b> — Cannington (SP)	<b>Tell, Hon. Christine</b> — Regina Wascana Plains (SP)
<b>Harrison, Hon. Jeremy</b> — Meadow Lake (SP)	<b>Vermette, Doyle</b> — Cumberland (NDP)
<b>Hindley, Hon. Everett</b> — Swift Current (SP)	<b>Weekes, Hon. Randy</b> — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)
<b>Jenson, Terry</b> — Martensville-Warman (SP)	<b>Wilson, Nadine</b> — Saskatchewan Rivers (Ind.)
<b>Kaeding, Warren</b> — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)	<b>Wotherspoon, Trent</b> — Regina Rosemont (NDP)
<b>Keisig, Travis</b> — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)	<b>Wyant, Hon. Gordon</b> — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
<b>Kirsch, Delbert</b> — Batoche (SP)	<b>Young, Aleana</b> — Regina University (NDP)
<b>Lambert, Lisa</b> — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)	<b>Young, Colleen</b> — Lloydminster (SP)
<b>Lawrence, Greg</b> — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)	
<b>Lemaigre, Jim</b> — Athabasca (SP)	<b>Vacant</b> — Lumsden-Morse
<b>Love, Matt</b> — Saskatoon Eastview (NDP)	<b>Vacant</b> — Regina Coronation Park

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**Standings**

Government Caucus: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 46; Opposition Caucus: New Democratic Party (NDP) — 12;  
Independent: Saskatchewan United Party (Ind.) — 1; Vacant — 2

**Clerks-at-the-Table**

**Clerk** — Iris Lang  
**Law Clerk & Parliamentary Counsel** — Kenneth S. Ring, K.C.  
**Deputy Clerk** — Kathy Buriannyk  
**Principal Clerk** — Robert Park

**Sergeant-at-Arms** — Lyall Frederiksen

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

**The Speaker:** — I would just like to welcome all our guests here today. This is a very special day, of course. And I'd like to just caution all our guests that you are not to take part in the debate in any way, and that includes clapping or talking or heckling. But also do not take any photos, do not use your iPhone or whatever appliance you have, and no videos is allowed as well.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I would say that the government will take your well-heeded advice as well, Mr. Speaker.

To you and through you, more seriously, I would like to introduce to all members of this House and welcome everyone that has joined us here today on this once-in-a-year event where we have the opportunity to release the budget in the province of Saskatchewan — an important day for all of us here that serve you in this House on both sides of this Assembly.

An important day for you and your organization, no doubt, but I would say equally it's an important day for people across the province of Saskatchewan. And what you will see today is a budget that most certainly prioritizes growth that works for everyone in this province.

And I would like to say thank you for your guidance of your MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] wherever they may sit on this floor, your government of the province more proper over the last number of years, and thank you in advance for your guidance into the future.

And welcome today to your Legislative Assembly on this budget day in Saskatchewan.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier said, it's an important day. And it's an honour on behalf of the official opposition to join with the Premier, to you and through you, to invite all of the guests that we have with us here today in the galleries and on the floor, some watching downstairs and some watching at home.

It's an important day as we learn the budget for the next year in this province, important day for those leaders that we see here: leaders in business; student leaders; leaders in industry, in health care, in education; and elected officials from our municipalities, RMs [rural municipality], from our school boards, Mr. Speaker.

And I would like to join with the Premier in welcoming all of these guests to their Legislative Assembly on behalf of the official opposition, and I invite all members to join with me in showing our appreciation for them being here with us today.

## PRESENTING PETITIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan calling for improved mental health services for northern and rural Saskatchewan. This was initiative from our youth, Mr. Speaker, primarily gathering signatures out of Saskatoon and also across the province because this is an issue that matters dearly to them.

They wish to bring to our attention that the rate of suicide among Indigenous peoples is three times higher than that of non-Indigenous people; that suicide rates of Indigenous people living on-reserve are twice as high as those living off-reserve; that the historical and ongoing impacts of colonization, displacement, and intergenerational trauma are related to the high rates of suicide among Indigenous people; that government has a role to play in destigmatizing mental health and addictions; and that funding safe consumption sites, wellness centres, and specialized outreach programs would save lives.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to address and work with vulnerable communities in the North and rural areas, and to provide adequate mental health funding and services for northern and rural Indigenous communities.

This is signed by individuals from Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, I do so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Melfort.

**Mr. Goudy:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition on behalf of people that we serve. We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: that the Liberal-NDP [New Democratic Party] federal government continues to infringe on the constitutional rights of the province of Saskatchewan and implement policies that are detrimental to our province's economic well-being; that the commitments and actions of our federal government have been controlling Saskatchewan's resources and made those rights unclear; that an unsupportive federal government will continue to impede Saskatchewan's potential to play a global role in providing resources to the world market.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to implement Saskatchewan-first policies and legislation that will support the development of Saskatchewan as a global supplier of food, fuel, and fertilizer without federal infringement on Saskatchewan's constitutional authority.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

**Mr. Love:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and present a petition to the Government of Saskatchewan to fix the rural health care staffing crisis. As critic for Rural and Remote Health, I hear these concerns all the time from people of Saskatchewan.

And those who've signed the petition today would like to bring to our attention the recruitment and retention of health care professionals is a particular issue in Saskatchewan's rural health care facilities, and many of those facilities have experienced closures and shutdowns under this government's watch. They want us to know that the ongoing pandemic has created burnout, led to early retirements and resignations, which has rippling effects in communities across Saskatchewan.

Health care workers and their families are valuable assets in our hometowns and our communities, and we want to communicate to them how valuable they are to this province.

I'll read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to fix the rural health care staffing crisis.

This petition today is mostly signed by residents of Wilkie. I do so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

**Mr. Teed:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present our petition calling on the Government of Saskatchewan to scrap the PST [provincial sales tax] on construction.

The undersigned residents wish to bring to your attention the following: the Sask Party government removed the PST exemption for construction contracts, and their decision is drastically impacting Saskatchewan's construction industry; many small and medium-sized businesses have already been hurt by the Sask Party government's tax hikes and will be forced to pass these rising costs on to their customers; and Saskatchewan families have been burdened by a decade of Sask Party utility rates and tax increases and can't afford another Sask Party government tax.

I'll 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 stop saddling families and businesses with the costs of their mismanagement and immediately reinstate the PST exemption on construction and stop hurting Saskatchewan businesses and families.

The signatories today reside in Regina. I do so present.

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

**Ms. Conway:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be on my feet to present a petition that's very near and dear to my heart. It's a petition to increase, meaningfully, SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] rates in Saskatchewan. That's the Saskatchewan assured income disability program.

And of course we know that that program has not seen an increase in over seven years, and that that represents over a 20 per cent decrease in benefits to people who rely on this program. Individuals who rely on SAID have significant and enduring disabilities and face barriers to employment, Mr. Speaker.

We launched this petition on Monday with hundreds of signatures from over 50 communities from every corner of the province. There's also an online version that garnered over 1,000 signatures in a matter of days, Mr. Speaker.

So with that I will read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to call on the Government of Saskatchewan to increase SAID rates to account for inflation, respect the constitutional rights of persons with disability in Saskatchewan by halting discriminatory clawback practices, index the SAID basic amount to inflation going forward, and provide targeted relief to those in highest need, that is, single individuals relying on market rent.

The signatories of the petition reside in Regina and Prince Albert. I do so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon University.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present our petition calling on the Sask Party government to bring in universal access to birth control for all people in Saskatchewan. We've been presenting this petition for over a year now. So far no response, but today seems like a lucky day. Let's hope.

The undersigned residents of the province would like to bring to our attention the following: that Saskatchewan has some of the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy in the country — that's ages 12 to 20 years old, Mr. Speaker; that cost is one of the biggest barriers to accessing contraceptive birth control in Saskatchewan, especially among adolescents; that having consistent and affordable access to contraceptive options is essential for promoting bodily autonomy, preventing unwanted pregnancy, and saving money on sexual and reproductive health care; and finally that sexual and reproductive health and rights are human rights.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to adopt a policy making

no-cost prescription contraceptive available to all Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories today reside in Pleasantdale and Star City. I do so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

**Ms. Ritchie:** — I rise today to present a petition calling on the government to take real action to fight climate change. Mr. Speaker, municipal leaders across Saskatchewan understand best the impacts of climate change in their communities. Wildfires, droughts, floods, ice storms, and extreme weather of all sorts is happening with increasing frequency and intensity, and local governments are the ones who feel the effects of these extreme events first.

According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Insurance Bureau of Canada, avoiding the worst impacts of climate change at the municipal level will cost an estimated \$5.3 billion per year, shared amongst all three orders of government. Those investments are critical to helping local communities adapt to the changing climate and reduce risk from extreme weather. We know that climate change costs Saskatchewan taxpayers, municipalities, and businesses millions of dollars every year, and the cost of inaction and denial are too great, threatening the economy and our citizens' well-being.

I will read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan enact a credible climate action plan and allocate appropriate funding to ensure real reductions in our greenhouse gas emissions, consistent with the scientific consensus to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

It is signed by the residents of Vanscoy. I do so present.

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

#### Cost of Living in Saskatchewan

**Mr. Teed:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to express my deep concern about the rising cost of living in our province. Despite promises made by the Saskatchewan Party government to help, it's clear that they have failed to deliver.

So many folks are finding it harder and harder to pay their rent, afford utilities, and feed their families. Many people are living paycheque to paycheque, and any unexpected expense can cause significant financial hardship.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know of another Angus Reid poll that says 55 per cent of people say they are worse now than they were one year ago. Seniors, in particular, are finding it difficult to afford the cost of health care, medication, and other essentials despite having worked their entire lives.

The Saskatchewan Party government has had every opportunity to address these issues that they've consistently failed to deliver. They continue to cut vital public services including education and health care, and hiked power and energy bills. We need to work together to ensure that everyone in Saskatchewan has access to the essentials they need to live a good life. And we need a government that will take real action to address the cost-of-living crisis and prioritize well-being of the people of this province over everything else. Because, Mr. Speaker, we truly are stronger together.

[13:45]

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

#### Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association Volunteers Maintain Trail Network

**Mr. Keisig:** — What a great winter. Snow blanketed virtually the whole province, providing much-needed moisture to our world-class agricultural producers, Mr. Speaker. This snow also provides a unique recreational opportunity. There is no better way to enjoy the outdoors, Mr. Speaker, than on the back of a snowmobile.

The Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association has been around for over 50 years. It is the umbrella organization representing 65 local snowmobile clubs that groom, maintain, and build all of the 10 600 kilometres of trail that cross this great province. These trails allow someone to travel from the southeastern part of the province, where my colleague serves the great constituents of Cannington, to the Northwest, where my other colleague serves the great people of Athabasca. Volunteers maintain this trail network and all Saskatchewan residents genuinely appreciate their efforts. These snowmobile trails are enjoyable and create millions of tourist dollars and all the economic spinoffs that come with it in rural Saskatchewan.

Thank you to all local club members, landowners, and volunteers for all their work, along with mother nature, creating an enjoyable way to spend some great family time outdoors. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Social and Economic Indicators in Saskatchewan

**Ms. Conway:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise in my place today to set the scene for this afternoon's provincial budget. It's important that all members, and the hundreds visiting here today, know where Saskatchewan is before we hear where we're going. Under this Premier's leadership, Mr. Speaker, far from being Sask-first, Saskatchewan has slipped to the back of the provincial pack on numerous fronts.

During this Premier's time, every other province has created jobs faster than Saskatchewan. We're dead last when it comes to jobs growth. Under this Premier, Saskatchewan's economy is among the most sluggish; our GDP [gross domestic product] has actually shrunk; the worst record on building permits; back of the pack on immigration retention; stagnant wages as the rest of Canada sees

earnings increase, all while our minimum wage remains the lowest in Canada.

And these economic failures have ripple effects, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan has the worst rates of intimate partner violence, the worst rates of child poverty, skyrocketing crime, overdose deaths, food bank use, and homelessness.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people are a caring people. Saskatchewan people want better, not just for themselves, but for their neighbour, for working people to be able to get ahead, for old and for young not to be left behind, for everyone to have a warm and safe place to live.

But, Mr. Speaker, so far this Sask Party government has failed to deliver. On this side, we love this province. And that's why we're waiting, hoping to see some of the change we need today.

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

### **Partnership Agreement with First Nations Creates Opportunities for Growth**

**Mr. Nerlien:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another great news story from Kelvington-Wadena constituency. An announcement two weeks ago of a partnership agreement between BHP, 2Nations Bird Construction Limited Partnership, Beady's and Okemasis Cree Nation, and Fishing Lake First Nation sets the stage for continued engagement of First Nations in building Saskatchewan's economic future.

Mr. Speaker, agreements like this help First Nations build capacity for long-term sustainable economic development including trades, skill, and leadership development. This partnership includes procurement agreements for Indigenous-produced goods and services, employment opportunities, and site services with maintenance agreements. This agreement also builds on long-standing agreements led by KDM Constructors, another Indigenous-led BHP subcontractor. It's my understanding that there are two parts to this contract. The first is for concrete foundation work, and the second a three-year site services and maintenance agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank BHP for continuing to work with Indigenous partners in the area. And special thanks to Chief Edwin Ananas of Beady's Okemasis and Bob Kayseas, Chair of FLFN Ventures, for their work in creating opportunities for economic growth in the area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **Sophie's Closet Supports Ukrainian Newcomers in Prince Albert**

**Ms. A. Ross:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last April Sonya Jahn organized a group of friends and acquaintances in Prince Albert to volunteer, collect donations, and help Ukrainian newcomers — the beginnings of Sophie's Closet.

Sophie's Closet is named after Sonya's mother, Sophie, who was

born in Ukraine and came to Prince Albert on June 21st, 1931 with her mother and two older sisters. They collect new and gently used items for families which are provided at no cost to help furnish their new homes. Sonya and her volunteers sincerely thank those who have donated household items, non-perishable foods, clothing, personal hygiene items, and gift cards to create new homes for our newcomers. The kindness shown by the people of Prince Albert and the business community has truly been incredible. More than 52 Ukrainian families have settled in Prince Albert and more will soon arrive.

Mr. Speaker, Sonya and Gordon Jahn are in attendance here today. I ask all members to join me in welcoming Ukrainian families to our province and to thank Sonya Jahn and the volunteers and everyone who has and is continuing to make donations and support Ukrainian families who now call Prince Albert and Saskatchewan home. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Moosomin.

### **Moosomin Airport Expansion**

**Mr. Bonk:** — The Moosomin airport expansion project took a huge step forward recently with Nutrien donating more than \$2.7 million. And I'm proud to say that our government followed that up with \$1.3 million in addition to the funds already given under the CAP [community airport partnership] program. In total, that's 4 million in new funding for the airport. This adds to the approximately \$2 million that the community had already raised.

I want to thank Nutrien for this amazing vote of confidence in the Moosomin region, and I want to recognize all the partners who came together to make this happen. Fourteen local municipalities, including some from across the border in Manitoba, helped fund this airport, along with businesses big and small.

High school principal Jeff St. Onge and Dr. Schalk Van der Merwe started raising awareness for the need of an expanded airport in 2018, primarily so that the Saskatchewan air ambulance had a place to land. Dr. Van said it could make the difference between life and death for some of his patients.

The RM of Moosomin council, Reeve Dave Moffatt, and CAO [chief administrative officer] Kendra Lawrence have taken a leadership role in the project; and the town of Moosomin and their council, Mayor Larry Tomlinson, have also committed an additional \$150,000 since this announcement was made.

The newly formed Community Builders Alliance has also pushed hard in the last year under the leader of President Tyler Thorn. And as Kevin Weedmark of *The World-Spectator* put it, "...with Kristjan Hebert quietly moving mountains in the background."

This is an example of co-operation and collaboration at its best. And, Mr. Speaker, this is yet another Saskatchewan example of growth that works for everyone.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.



### Economic Growth in Saskatchewan

**Mr. Kaeding:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past year has been an exciting time for Saskatchewan. Our exports and international trade has continued to grow. Total merchandise exports for November were valued at more than \$5 billion.

Last year, our province reached \$1 billion in exports to Mexico. This is a direct result of our international trade offices selling the Saskatchewan story across the world. That international trade and export growth has resulted in more jobs and opportunities for our residents.

We continue to have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, and with a year-over-year increase of 16,400 new jobs in January, we're on track to reaching our goal of 100,000 new jobs by the end of 2030.

Mr. Speaker, there are more Indigenous people working in our province than ever before, with over 61,100 Indigenous people working off-reserve. Our province also hosted their second annual Indigenous Business Gathering in Saskatoon, with more than 80 trade show booths, to highlight the growing Indigenous engagement in our economy.

And Mr. Speaker, to ensure that our growth can continue without federal interference, we passed *The Saskatchewan First Act* just last week, because our government is committed to growth that works for everyone. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### QUESTION PERIOD

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

#### Management of the Provincial Economy

**Ms. Beck:** — This is a premier failing to deliver on job creation. Since he took office in February of 2018, our province has the worst job creation record in all of Canada. Mr. Speaker, that's dead last. People in this province don't need excuses, they need more jobs and bigger paycheques. To the Premier: does he take any responsibility for his record, the worst-in-the-country record on job creation?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, in just a few minutes you're going to see a budget delivered by our Deputy Premier, our Minister of Finance, that is titled *Growth that Works for Everyone*, Mr. Speaker. And there's no "that works for everyone" if there isn't the aforementioned growth.

Thankfully in this province, as announced this morning, we are now at the fastest rate of population growth that this province has seen in 108 years, Mr. Speaker: 29,000 people this past year made Saskatchewan their home, 20,000 jobs created by folks in communities from corner to corner in this province, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that Saskatchewan is growing at a faster pace than we have in over a century, Mr. Speaker, and we're poised for more of that in the years ahead.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, despite whatever the tag line is on their budget, this tired and out-of-touch government, their failure to create jobs is actually making the cost-of-living crisis worse. This is a government that has raised taxes. They've hiked power and energy bills, and they've failed to deliver any relief on the cost-of-living crisis. In fact, 55 per cent of people in this province feel worse off this year than they did last year.

When will the Premier finally offer the people of this province some relief when it comes to paying the bills?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most certainly, if you go back over the last number of months, we had a four-point action plan in last year's budget that we're operating under up until the next few days, Mr. Speaker. In that, our four-point action plan had reductions in taxes for small businesses that are driving our economy here in this province, employing people in our communities. It had \$500 affordability tax credits distributed to everyone in the province that filed income tax in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And it included paying down a billion dollars in debt, Mr. Speaker, which benefits everyone today and years into the future with the tens of millions of dollars we will forgo in interest costs.

I dare say, Mr. Speaker, without pre-empting the Deputy Premier, that we may see more of that here just in a few minutes, Mr. Speaker, that commitment to fiscal prudence in this province, that commitment to ensuring that this province can continue to experience growth so that we can then invest that growth in the people that we represent across the province, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Health Care Staffing

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, this is a government failing to deliver on the cost of living, failing to deliver on jobs, and they're failing to deliver on health care. Here's what nurses have to say about health care in our province: the system is in collapse and is in crisis. The Health minister, well, Mr. Speaker, he says there are ebbs and flows, but everything is just fine. I wonder who the Premier thinks that the people of Saskatchewan should believe when it comes to the state of health care in this province.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said many times in this House . . . And you're going to see the support for our health care initiatives in just a few minutes when the Minister of Finance delivers this year's budget, Mr. Speaker. You will see the support for the most ambitious health human resource recruitment, retention, training, and incentivization plan across the nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker, a plan that is already delivering results onto our front lines, into our health care facilities in community after community across the province.

Mr. Speaker, this builds off the effort that we have had in the health care space for the last number of years: 5,000 more nurses in our health care centres today versus 15 years ago, Mr. Speaker; over 700 more nurses in our health care facilities today, Mr.

Speaker, versus March of 2019 just prior to the pandemic.

There's more work to do in this space, Mr. Speaker. I dare say you're going to see some of that investment made here in the next number of minutes, Mr. Speaker. And you are going to see the continued investment to ensure that the folks that are offering — the front-line health care nurses, continuing care assistants, the folks in our health care facilities across this province — are going to continue to be rewarded for their efforts and thanked for their efforts, Mr. Speaker.

In the case of nurses, we have the second-highest remuneration package across the nation, Mr. Speaker. That, associated with our four-point health human resource plan, Mr. Speaker, it's working in Saskatchewan. We'd ask the members opposite to get behind it.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, it sounds like he chose the Health minister, but I'm going to stick with the nurses.

Here's what SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] president Tracy Zambory has to say about the crisis in our ERs [emergency room]: "There is not the time," and I quote, Mr. Speaker. "There is not the time, there is not the capability, and there is not the staff to give safe patient care in most of our facilities in the province anymore."

Mr. Speaker, she describes a system in collapse. To fix this crisis, SUN is calling for the government to work with nurses on a task force to address retention and recruitment. Will the Premier finally listen? And will he work with nurses to create this task force to fix the crisis in our ERs?

[14:00]

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Whether it be any of our health care representatives, our two Health ministers, myself, MLAs across this province as they return to their communities, Mr. Speaker, to engage with constituents that they serve. Some work in health care facilities. Some utilize those health care facilities. I dare say at some point in our lives we all utilize those services that are so very important.

And that's why this government is committed, committed to increasing the number of nurses, the number of health care workers that we have in those facilities, Mr. Speaker. We most certainly aren't looking at reducing those services. That's why we brought forward the most ambitious health human resource plan in the nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker. I dare say you're going to see some funding go towards that plan in the next number of minutes, Mr. Speaker.

We're bringing folks to the front line. As I said, there's 700 more nurses on our front lines today relative to March of 2019, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health was most recently in the Philippines. I believe the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] has returned to the Philippines on a second immigration mission.

There's over 400 offers that have been made, Mr. Speaker. Those

folks are starting to land in Saskatchewan, land in our health care facilities, and they're bringing much-needed reinforcements to our front-line workers that have done a yeoman's amount of work over the last number of years, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

**Ms. Mowat:** — The most ambitious plan according to who, Mr. Speaker? No one is agreeing with the government on this front. This tired and out-of-touch government isn't listening to front-line nurses and they're not listening to local voices in health care. Our ERs in Saskatoon, in Regina, in Yorkton are in crisis. Our rural hospitals are routinely closed, forced to turn patients away due to short-staffing. Health care workers are sounding the alarm that the status quo is not cutting it.

When will the government start working with these front-line workers, listening to local voices in health care?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Rural and Remote and myself undertook a tour across the province, meeting with health care workers, sitting down in the coffee shops with them, sitting down with the foundations, sitting down with community leaders to get their input on how we can improve on our health care system from the two years previous that the health care workers carried us through that challenging two years, Mr. Speaker. Out of that came an action plan, Mr. Speaker, came a four-point plan.

What they consistently told us, Mr. Speaker, is we need more people. We need more nurses. We need more technicians. We need more doctors. Mr. Speaker, we've been able to start to deliver on that. In the last 18 months we've had 165 doctors that have moved into the province, Mr. Speaker. This is about a 90-net doctors coming into our province since some have retired, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Advanced Education announced 550 new training seats on top of the 150 training seats that we already had with nursing, Mr. Speaker. We also have, as the Premier identified, 400 job offers coming in from the Philippines. Those people will be arriving to shore up our system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

**Ms. Mowat:** — We have also been meeting with people from communities across the province, Mr. Speaker, and listening to the concerns that are being brought forward about the health care system. This government is not listening to local voices. One thing that we hear over and over again is that there is a shortage of family doctors. In the birthplace of medicare, we can and do and should do so much better, Mr. Speaker. Every person should be able to find a family doctor in their community.

We've called on the government to provide supports to family doctors as other provinces have done. When will this government listen and step up with the supports that family doctors need?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you I do have ongoing conversations with Dr. Gjevre at the Saskatchewan Medical Association that represents our fine doctors in the province, Mr. Speaker. We have sat down. We have listened.

And I've also met with the family physicians, again the tour that we did last year, to sit down and listen. Mr. Speaker, we were able, just last week, to announce there is a \$200,000 incentive for doctors on a return-to-service for five years to be able to go out in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We've announced previously investments in our nurse practitioners to be able to do that.

We've invested in virtual health, Mr. Speaker, to be able to make sure that those communities are served by the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to do that. And not too long from now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is going to be able to stand up and deliver a budget and increase those already-announced incentives, Mr. Speaker, and this is going to be growth that works for everyone. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Establishment of a Provincial Revenue Agency**

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, this tired and out-of-touch government should be focused on things like health care, cost of living, and creating jobs. But they're failing to deliver, and they're focused on their own pet projects instead.

Case in point, this government's proposal to create a Sask revenue agency. That's this government's proposal to spend \$10 million each and every year to hire tax collectors and auditors to collect corporate tax, something the CRA [Canada Revenue Agency] already does at no cost for the province of Saskatchewan. It's a foolish idea to waste public dollars and strangle local businesses in more red tape and more costs.

Why won't this Finance minister scrap this nonsense plan for the Sask revenue agency?

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

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has asked this question many times in this House. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this is the third day this week he asked these same questions, and it's only Wednesday, Mr. Speaker.

The Finance minister has answered these questions. This is exploratory in nature only, Mr. Speaker. The member makes it sound like it's something unbelievable that nobody could do. Our neighbours to the west, Alberta, have done this for 40 years, Mr. Speaker. We already collect and administer PST. It's exploratory in nature, Mr. Speaker. The NDP might be scared to look at new innovative ways of doing things, Mr. Speaker, but this government is not.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, being flush with cash is no excuse to waste money. You can sort of see how these guys have tripled the debt, Mr. Speaker. This is a costly waste of government's energy and resources, which should be laser focused on what actually matters to people: jobs, the cost of living, and health care.

Instead they're pushing ahead with their plan for a tax collection agency that will cost taxpayers \$10 million per year and that will add \$16 million more per year for the 42,000 businesses across Saskatchewan. That's \$260 million over 10 years for the businesses and taxpayers of Saskatchewan. No one is calling for a less effective, more cumbersome tax system that costs taxpayers more, that costs businesses more and forces them to file twice, no one except that out-of-touch Sask Party government.

Why won't that tired, out-of-touch government do the right thing and shelve this plan before they waste a whole bunch of money and time?

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

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite's just throwing costs around willy-nilly without knowing. As I said, it's exploratory. That's being looked at. Mr. Speaker, there's reasons this is being looked at. Like I said, our neighbour to the west has done this for many years successfully.

Mr. Speaker, in the past, relying on the Canadian revenue agency to do the collections for us, there's been proposals put forward by the province of Saskatchewan that have been rejected, Mr. Speaker. We collect our own tax, we'll be in control of that, Mr. Speaker. One more time for the member opposite: it's exploratory only.

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

#### **Provincial Economy and Tax on Construction Labour**

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, if this government was focused on creating good jobs, they'd start with removing the PST that they stuck on construction labour just a few years ago. It's a literal tax on jobs. It's been a gut punch to growth in Saskatchewan.

The stats bear it out. The PST on construction labour has forced municipalities to hand back millions to this tired and out-of-touch government, and it's made Saskatchewan a less competitive place to invest and to build while driving up costs for families, communities, and businesses.

Why won't the Sask Party government reverse their damaging decision to add the PST to construction labour?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll get to the member's question, but I'm going to start with an observation. And for folks who are in the room — we often don't have 100-plus people in this room — this is what happens every day. The NDP are constantly and relentlessly negative, desperate, running down the province, running down our economy, attacking job creators. This is literally what they do every day.

On this side of the House, the contrast: positive, optimistic, forward looking, Mr. Speaker, innovative. And how is that working, Mr. Speaker? It is resulting in growth that is working for everyone. Fifty-seven per cent increase in exports in one year alone, Mr. Speaker, last year. The second-lowest unemployment rate in the entire country. Housing starts last month, up 77 per cent, Mr. Speaker, year over year. Investment in building construction up 22 per cent year over year, Mr. Speaker. One of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, 20,000 new jobs. I look forward to going on and on, Mr. Speaker. The future is very, very bright.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — He didn't touch the question. You can see he gets pretty worked up when his record is exposed, Mr. Speaker. You know, this Premier and that jobs minister has the worst record in the country on all economic measures. And the decision to add the PST to construction labour is a direct cause and contributor of that record of failure.

This is the epitome of a job-killing tax. It drives up costs for projects, small and large. It drives away jobs. And it drives down our ability to compete for investment, especially when Alberta just next door has no PST, and when we see major incentives rolling out in the *Inflation Reduction Act* south of the border.

Why won't that jobs minister and this tired, out-of-touch government admit this was a mistake from day one, scrap the PST on construction labour to fire up our economy and create the good jobs that Saskatchewan people deserve?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Oh my goodness, Mr. Speaker. The NDP have constructed this alternative narrative. I think some of them actually believe it, Mr. Speaker, that everything is terrible. One of them actually said the economy is a dumpster fire, Mr. Speaker.

This is precisely though why, and I think everybody in the room is seeing it today, Mr. Speaker, why there are a handful of them on that side of the floor and there is this group on this side of the floor, Mr. Speaker. A group that is positive. A group that is optimistic. A group that is genuinely excited about the future of this province and creating the conditions for growth that is going to work for everyone.

We're going to see some more details of that, Mr. Speaker, in just a few minutes. Six minutes from now the Minister of Finance is going to be speaking to that. But we have had a plan, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House from day one. That plan has resulted in record population growth. Remarkable news today,

Mr. Speaker: 1.21 million people living in this province. The fastest rate of growth, not just in 10 or 20 or 30 years, in 114 years, Mr. Speaker. The fastest rate of growth that we have ever seen. This province is moving in the right direction, and we're going to keep it going that way.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

### Funding for Education

**Mr. Love:** — Mr. Speaker, for years teachers and students in this province have not received the support that they need from this government. In Saskatchewan schools this year, we are seeing thousands more students but yet hundreds fewer teachers. And inside those increasingly complex classrooms, we are seeing students with needs: students who are new to the English language, students in need of intensive supports, students with mental health needs, and so much more.

But those classrooms have been met with cuts, cuts as a result of this government's failure to adequately invest in education. Teachers in this province deserve respect, and students in this province deserve support. When will this government step up and make investments in classrooms that are needed today?

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

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we have been doing over the last number of years in this province with, each and every year, record levels of funding for education in this province, Mr. Speaker. On top of that, construction that we have never seen in this province in terms of capital construction, renovations, preventative maintenance funding for school divisions across this province, Mr. Speaker.

[14:15]

Mr. Speaker, and to back that up I would say this, Mr. Speaker. We know that the Leader of the Opposition just last Monday said, and I quote, "Statistics Canada numbers don't lie," Mr. Speaker. And so what does Stats Canada say? Stats Canada says that Saskatchewan has the highest per capita spending on primary and secondary schooling amongst all provinces, 24 per cent higher than the provincial average.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

**Mr. Love:** — Mr. Speaker, I think that minister better check those numbers with school boards, teachers, and families who experience cuts, because that's this government's record, Mr. Speaker. His government's record is cuts, year after year, in our classrooms, forcing teachers to do more with less. Enrolment is growing and that's a good thing, but this tired and out-of-touch government isn't providing the dollars that are needed to help every student in our province to reach their full potential.

Public education is an investment. It's an investment in our kids, in our communities, and in our future as a province. When will this government recognize that?

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

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite will know in the budget that is to conclude in the next couple of days, Mr. Speaker, we did provide over \$2 billion in school operating funding, Mr. Speaker. And on top of that, Mr. Speaker, in mid-year we added \$20 million so that school divisions could address inflationary pressures, as well as an additional \$15.5 million so that school divisions could address enrolment, Mr. Speaker.

We know that school growth in our public schools is growing at the fastest rate, Mr. Speaker, in 20 years. It's likely higher than that, Mr. Speaker. That's as far back as our records show, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, what that also shows . . . And that's why, Mr. Speaker, that we've invested in 85 major capital projects since 2007: over \$2.4 billion in school capital, 57 brand new schools and replacements, 28 major renovations, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that's growth that works for everyone, and I think in a couple of minutes you're going to find out more.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon University.

**Ms. Bowes:** — Mr. Speaker, this government clearly doesn't understand the value of education, and that extends to our post-secondary sector just the same. For years funding has been flatlined by this government following deep, devastating cuts in 2017 and no help with inflationary pressures whatsoever under their agreement, preventing young people from getting an education and from getting a good job, Mr. Speaker.

This government talks a lot about the skilled labour shortage, yet ironically they're failing to invest in the educational institutions that we count on to make our economy more innovative, our workforce more skilled, and to raise our standard of living.

So when will this government get serious about investing in our province's universities and colleges?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes the importance of post-secondary education to the future of this province, Mr. Speaker, the future of our economy. And I think you'll hear when the Minister of Finance stands up, my good friend stands up and delivers her budget, Mr. Speaker, you'll recognize the importance that this government puts in post-secondary education.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, a number of years ago we entered into a four-year funding agreement with our post-secondary institutions to provide consistent and predictable funding for our institutions, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're committed to continuing having conversations with our post-secondary sector, recognizing the importance of that sector to this government, Mr. Speaker. Certainly happy to continue to have those discussions with our post-secondary sector, Mr. Speaker, and looking forward to having those conversations so we can ensure that we provide the proper support to those post-secondary institutions.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

### Harm Reduction Initiatives

**Ms. Mowat:** — Mr. Speaker, the overdose crisis in Saskatchewan continues to claim lives. 103 people have already lost their lives in 2023, 404 people died last year, and 402 the year before that. Mr. Speaker, that's almost 1,000 people.

The evidence shows that harm reduction saves lives, and that safe consumption sites save lives. How many more people need to die before this government will invest in safe consumption sites?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And on behalf of the government as minister responsible, I extend my condolences to each and every family and community that's lost a loved one as a result of an overdose. And I've met with some of these families too, Mr. Speaker.

This government is spending \$470 million in this budget into mental health and addictions, a targeted \$92 million specifically to some of these very important areas: harm reduction initiatives such as rapid access to addictions medicine clinics; the piloting of overdose outreach teams where we pair a primary-care paramedic with a mental health and addictions worker in Regina, in Saskatoon, and we're looking forward to being able to potentially expand that program elsewhere as well, Mr. Speaker; and most importantly, into treatment and recovery where this government will be investing in at least 150 more treatment spaces in Saskatchewan. The first number of spaces were announced last week, and 14 more post-treatment beds at the facility in Estevan, Mr. Speaker.

And I think in the budget that we're about to see momentarily, further investments into this very important area for the Government of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Please state your point of order.

### POINT OF ORDER

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Mr. Speaker, I hate to call a point of order on a day like today, but the Government House Leader can't help himself with unparliamentary language every time he gets up to speak. Today he chose the phrase, "alternative narrative."

Mr. Speaker, you've already ruled phrases like "alternative facts" unparliamentary. I ask that you find the same today and ask the member to apologize and withdraw the statement.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Government House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would invite Mr. Speaker to review *Hansard* and return into the House if he deems fit with a ruling on that matter.

Obviously we believe that is in order.

**The Speaker:** — I will rule right now. I ask the Government House Leader to withdraw and apologize.

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw and apologize.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

### TABLING OF ESTIMATES AND SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to submit the estimates and supplementary estimates accompanied by a message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

**The Speaker:** — Those that are able to, please rise for the message from the Lieutenant Governor. The message is as follows:

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2024, and supplementary estimates no. 2 of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2023, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

His Honour the Honourable Russell B. Mirasty, Lieutenant Governor, province of Saskatchewan.

Please be seated. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

### MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, colleagues, and guests, it's so nice to see so many of you here today in your legislature on such a great day in our province.

The first premier of our province, Walter Scott, had this to say about Saskatchewan's future, and I quote:

This province has of yet less than half a million souls, and there is plenty of room for at least 10 million. Just as sure as the sun shines, there will be within this province alone some day a population running into the tens of millions.

Premier Scott said those words in 1910 at a time that Saskatchewan was growing by tens of thousands of people every year. People came to this province from many places to build a better future and a better life for themselves and for their families. When Walter Scott was premier, Saskatchewan grew at a pace that we have not seen since, until now.

Mr. Speaker, just today we learned from Statistics Canada that in 2022 Saskatchewan grew by more than 29,000 people. That is the biggest population increase we have seen in any single year since 1914 — 1914 when Walter Scott was still premier. In other words, we haven't seen this kind of growth since the last time we had a premier named Scott.

Mr. Speaker, speaking of a growing population — although maybe not growth this year — I'd like to introduce my family that's been able to join us here today. There are four members of my family here today that weren't born yet when I was first elected, so I too am helping with that population growth within my family, although I don't have to do the work so much this time.

So with me today I have my middle daughter Shannon Harpauer, her partner Brian Burgess, and my grandchildren Makenna and Emryk; and my oldest daughter, Crystal Buckoski, and my grandsons Lucas and James. Welcome to your Assembly.

It is my honour today to table a budget designed to ensure that growth continues, and it's a growth that works for everyone. Mr. Speaker, the 2023-24 budget is built on a foundation of a sound management with a projected surplus of \$1 billion. There are no tax increases and no new taxes in this budget, helping to keep life affordable for Saskatchewan people. When taxes, utilities, and housing costs are combined, Saskatchewan is the most affordable place to live in Canada.

Saskatchewan's economy is leading the country in growth. Saskatchewan is expected to lead all provinces in economic growth in 2022 and to be second in 2023, according to private sector forecasts.

Mr. Speaker, more people are living in our province than ever before and more people are working in our province than ever before. Employment reached an all-time high in 2022, adding over 20,000 new full-time jobs. Already in 2023 there are 9,400 more people working in Saskatchewan than a year ago. And that is growth that works for everyone.

Business investments continue to grow. More than 80 major projects have been committed to by private companies in recent years for a total investment of nearly \$32 billion. Saskatchewan has what the world needs. And Saskatchewan is a safe, secure, sustainable supplier of valuable commodities in an increasingly unstable and dangerous world.

Our export growth is leading the nation up 56 per cent already this year on top of a 41 per cent increase last year. More export sales abroad means more jobs here at home. We are seeing strong results from manufacturing sales for wholesale and retail trade and investment in building construction.

A growing economy means higher revenue from our resources like potash and oil, and from companies that are investing in our province. Total revenue is forecast to be 19.7 billion in 2023-24, which is up 14.7 per cent from last year's budget.

Economic growth and our solid bottom line also allows our government to pay down up to one billion in operating debt this fiscal year. Paying down debt reduces interest costs by 44 million this year and allows us to invest those savings in people, programs, and projects. Including last fiscal year, debt retirement and lowering borrowing has generated 117 million in annual interest savings.

Mr. Speaker, government does not seek growth for the sake of growth. And I have a quote, and it is:

The purpose of growth is to build a better quality of life for Saskatchewan people, to build strong communities and strong families, and to grow a stronger Saskatchewan now and for the next decade.

And that quote, Mr. Speaker, is from our Premier in *Saskatchewan's Growth Plan*. And it's a perfect description of the growth that works for everyone. This budget builds that better quality of life by record investment in health care, education, social services, important infrastructure projects, and the security and safety of Saskatchewan people.

Growth that works for everyone means that everyone in Saskatchewan has access to health care services they need when they need it. This budget delivers record health investment of 7.1 billion overall. The Ministry of Health's budget is a record 6.9 billion, up 6.7 per cent from last year's budget. The 2023-24 budget includes 98.8 million for the Health human resource action plan. The plan — funded through the ministries of Health, Advanced Education, and Immigration and Career Training — will recruit, train, incentivize, and retain doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals.

In Health, 55.5 million in this budget is aimed at recruiting 250 full-time positions and expanding part-time positions in rural and remote areas around the province. It also includes support for recruiting internationally educated health care workers, and for the College of Medicine, for new academic and research positions, special residency seats, and family medicine seats.

[14:30]

In Advanced Education, 25.2 million in new funding will expand training programs. More than 550 seats will be added across 18 health training programs to help address critical market needs. Ten million will support the continuation of a 150-seat expansion in nurse programs. And 2.4 million will help train internationally educated health care providers.

Immigration and Career Training has 5.2 million in this budget to assist with initiatives to fill current vacancies through the licensing of internationally educated health care workers who are already here in Saskatchewan.

This budget includes a 42.5 million increase to fund the largest volume of surgical procedures in the history of our province. Six thousand more surgeries will bring the total to 103,000 surgeries this year. Mr. Speaker, this investment will reduce the surgical wait-list to its pre-pandemic level by March 2024, which is a year ahead of schedule.

This budget supports the health and care of seniors with a 39 million increase to procure long-term care beds and to support long-term care providers. 5.5 million will be used to hire 75 continuing care assistants. This initiative is the final phase of the government's three-year commitment of 18.4 million to hire 300 additional CCAs [continuing care aide] to deliver home care and support for seniors living in long-term care facilities.

There is a 19.8 million increase in this budget for 64 permanent acute care beds — 36 at Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon and 28 in Pasqua Hospital in Regina. Mr. Speaker, the 2023-24 budget includes an \$8.8 million increase to enhance emergency

medical services in rural and remote areas. This budget has a \$7 million increase for more medical imaging, primarily CT [computerized tomography] and MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] scans, and 2.6 million for more endoscopy procedures to help reduce wait times for those high-demand services.

This budget invests 518 million into mental health and addictions programs and services, a 7.5 per cent of the total Ministry of Health spending. It includes targeted investment of 12.1 million more than last year. It is the highest ever total investment for mental health and addictions programs and services. And this new funding will provide counselling and treatment services as well as support for the second phase of the 250 additional addictions treatment space commitment, and it's going to provide funding for 50 newly established treatment spaces.

The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency will receive a further 2.9 million for oncology drugs and additional staff. It brings the agency's grant to 222.7 million, its highest ever.

Mr. Speaker, more doctors, more nurses, and more health care professionals. More diagnostics, more surgeries, and new urgent care centres. More acute care beds, more long-term care beds, and more home care supports for seniors. More mental health funding and more counselling services. More spaces for addictions treatment. That, Mr. Speaker, is growth that works for everyone.

The 2023-24 budget includes more than 4 billion for pre-kindergarten to grade 12 and post-secondary education. That's up 6.2 per cent from last year's budget. Mr. Speaker, a growing province means higher enrolment. There are more than 189,000 students going to kindergarten to grade 12 in schools in Saskatchewan, which is the most in more than 20 years. Growth that works for everyone means every student receives the best possible education. The Ministry of Education will provide a record investment of 3.1 billion, an increase of 192.8 million or 6.7 per cent over last year to support schools, early learning and child care, and libraries in our growing province.

Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions will receive 2 billion in school operating funding, up 49.4 million from last year's allocation. In addition, the province is providing 7 million to maintain the more than 200 additional full-time education assistants hired since September of 2021, supporting diverse student and classroom needs.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget there is 23 million to support the start-up and operation of the new Saskatchewan Distance Learning Corporation, Sask DLC. Students should have access to the widest possible number of learning opportunities regardless of where they live in our province. Saskatchewan Distance Learning will provide those opportunities through a wide variety of online courses from kindergarten to grade 12 as well as high school electives. And grade 12 completion and electives will be available to adult students as well.

This budget includes 382.4 million for early learning and child care, an increase of 72.1 million or 23.3 per cent over last year. This funding supports young families in our province, helping make life more affordable. As of April 1st of 2023, it will reduce child care fees for families with children up to the age of six to an average of \$10 per day. Mr. Speaker, more students, more

schools, more affordable child care — that's growth that works for everyone.

Our government is also investing 764.8 million into the post-secondary education sector this year, which is an increase of 24.5 million or 3.3 per cent, giving the students more opportunities to prepare and pursue the careers of their choice right here in Saskatchewan. Post-secondary institutions are receiving 697.4 million in operating and capital grants, including 432 million for the University of Regina, the University of Saskatchewan, and the federated and affiliated colleges. There is 171.1 million for Saskatchewan Polytechnic, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, and the Dumont Technical Institute, and there is 35.6 million for Saskatchewan's regional colleges.

The 2023-24 budget includes 47 million for student supports, a 24 per cent increase due to a growing use of the Student Aid Fund and the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship. The graduate retention program, the most generous support program of its kind in the country, will continue to provide up to \$20,000 in tax credits to post-secondary students who remain in the province to begin their careers and build their future. In total the program provides approximately 65 million in support annually, and more than 81,000 students have claimed those credits to date.

Mr. Speaker, the 2023-24 budget includes 5.4 million to increase immigration through the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program to support the influx of Ukrainians landing in Saskatchewan and to provide more funding for settlement services.

There's 4 million to increase skills training seats, primarily in construction and related trades, and 1.2 million to increase the apprenticeship training allowance for students living away from home to attend training and for an anticipated increase in apprentices.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's growing economy means more people are working and fewer people requiring some assistance. At the same time, we are increasing support for those who do need it. The 2023-24 budget includes a record 1.4 billion for the Ministry of Social Services, a record budget to help vulnerable people and families build a better life. This budget includes an additional 26.6 million in benefits to support people with low incomes, families, and seniors.

For the second year in a row, Saskatchewan income support clients will receive higher monthly benefits. This budget includes 14.3 million to increase Saskatchewan income support benefit payments, including the adult basic benefit, the shelter benefit, and the alternative heating benefit by \$30 each per month.

Clients who receive the Saskatchewan assured income for disabilities, a program that did not exist 16 years ago, will receive \$30 more per month in living income benefits. The SAID program will continue to pay the actual costs of a number of expenses, such as utilities.

An additional 3 million fulfills the government's three-year commitment to increase the maximum seniors' income plan benefit. The maximum monthly benefit will rise by \$30 per month to \$360 a month. Mr. Speaker, over the course of our

government's 16 budgets, the seniors' income plan benefit has quadrupled from \$90 a month to \$360 a month, and that's growth that works for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, over the previous 16 months when the members opposite were in government, the seniors' income plan benefit didn't increase one thin dime. And that was no growth, and that didn't work for anyone.

A \$2.9 million investment will help make the cost of living in a personal care home more affordable. The personal care home benefit will increase by up to \$400 per month, and SAID clients under the age of 65 who live in a personal care home will receive up to \$684 more per month.

Mr. Speaker, government-wide funding for people with disabilities is projected to be 717.8 million in the 2023-24 budget, up 38.8 million from last year's budget and up 502.9 million, or 234 per cent, since 2007-08.

Our government is committed to working with community organizations that assist people who have complex challenges and are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The budget provides 7.7 million to support two Indigenous-led pilot projects that provide supportive housing and wraparound services for people experiencing homelessness in Saskatoon and Regina. This also includes funding for permanent shelter spaces and after-hours services.

In the 2023-24 budget, the Ministry of Social Services will provide over 400 million in funding to community-based organizations. That's an increase of 13.5 million for CBOs [community-based organization] that work with people with intellectual disabilities, those who support at-risk children, youth, and families, and approved private service homes that care for people with intellectual disabilities. This lift for social services CBOs is part of government's total \$17.6 million increase to the base budget for CBOs across all of government. Mr. Speaker, more support for seniors, more support for people with disabilities, more support for at-risk youth, and more support for those who are most vulnerable and need assistance — Mr. Speaker, that's growth that works for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, the 2023-24 budget includes over 1 billion in investments in public safety and the justice system. Everyone in Saskatchewan deserves to be protected from interpersonal violence. That's why this budget provides operational funding for second-stage housing to ensure women in dangerous situations can safely leave and stay away from abusive partners. New funding of 876,000 over three years will support survivors of interpersonal violence with the expansion of counselling services for clients that are living in second-stage housing. In total over 27.5 million in interpersonal violence supports and services are included in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, the 2023-24 budget invests in police and law enforcement initiatives, including 7 million to establish the Saskatchewan marshals service to increase policing capacity within the province with a focus on rural and remote areas. When fully operational in mid- to late 2026, the Saskatchewan marshals service will have approximately 70 officers for additional law enforcement presence across Saskatchewan, supporting the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] and municipal police



operations where appropriate.

This budget includes 1.6 million to expand the warrant enforcement and suppression team, known as WEST, with a new unit in Prince Albert. This new eight-officer unit targets offenders who represent a significant threat to the public. It's the third unit of its kind in Saskatchewan.

There is 1.6 million in this budget for a new crime reduction team, known as CRT, in the Battlefords region. The new CRT, with eight RCMP officers, targets street gangs and prolific offenders. The expansion brings the total number of CRT units in the province to 10.

This budget also includes new funding of 147,000 to build on the important work of the internet child exploitation unit, or ICE, to protect our children. More police officers, safer families, safer communities — that's growth that works for everyone.

The Saskatchewan Firearms Secretariat has 7.4 million in this budget to administer the firearms Act and to reduce the criminal use of firearms while protecting the rights of law-abiding gun owners.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency has 91.8 million in this budget to help protect the people of this province and create safe, strong communities, as well as the funding for the provincial disaster assistance program, which is being consolidated under this agency.

[14:45]

And this budget includes funding for a new two-year term position to develop and oversee the restart of the Parkland college firefighting training program in Melville.

Mr. Speaker, all of these new investments are possible because of Saskatchewan's strong and growing economy. The province's economy is strengthened by key budget investments. The 2023-24 budget includes a \$1.4 million increase to open a trade office in Germany, the fourth-largest economy in the world and the economic, financial, and manufacturing hub of the European Union.

This brings the international trade and investment strategy budget to 19.3 million to advance the province's economic interests abroad. Saskatchewan's expanded presence now includes nine trade offices that connect Saskatchewan businesses with investors and customers, and those efforts are paying off.

Saskatchewan's merchandise exports rose from 37 billion in 2021 to 52.4 billion in 2022, an increase of 41.6 per cent. And in the first month of 2023, exports were up even more — 56 per cent over last year. More exports abroad, Mr. Speaker, means more jobs here at home, and that's growth that works for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, this budget builds on Saskatchewan's position as a global leader in the exploration and mining of critical minerals. This budget commits 4 million to expand the targeted mineral exploration incentive to include exploration drilling for all hardrock minerals and increase the funding limit to support the development of these emerging commodities. The Saskatchewan

mineral exploration tax credit has been increased from 10 to 30 per cent to attract mineral exploration investment in Saskatchewan. The increase makes Saskatchewan more competitive with jurisdictions with similar programs.

Saskatchewan's agriculture industry is at the centre of our growing economy. Saskatchewan's growth plan goals include growing crop production in the province to 45 million tonnes annually, increasing livestock receipts to 3 billion per year, and growing agri-food exports to 20 billion annually by the year 2030. Saskatchewan producers harvested a crop of nearly 35 million tonnes in 2022, resulting in a record agri-food exports of 18.5 billion. Signs of a strong and growing ag sector is on track to meet those growth plan goals.

The 2023-24 budget includes 548.2 million for the Ministry of Agriculture, a 19 per cent increase from the previous year's budget, to fund programs, services, and agricultural research as well as providing business risk management programs. This budget has 89.8 million for strategic initiatives, including a record 38 million for agriculture research and innovation.

This budget has 408 million for a suite of federal-provincial risk management programs, including crop insurance and AgriStability. Average crop insurance coverage in 2023 is at a record high level of \$446 per acre due to increased commodity prices and yield coverage. The AgriStability compensation rate will increase from 70 to 80 per cent for the 2023 program year to better support farmers in time of need.

Mr. Speaker, a growing province means growing communities. Our government is committed to helping Saskatchewan communities meet the challenges of growth, and that's why our government introduced a dependable, predictable revenue-sharing formula that grows as our economy grows.

The 2023-24 budget includes the highest ever level of municipal revenue sharing — 297.9 million, an increase of 35.3 million or 13.4 per cent from last year. Municipal revenue sharing is up 134 per cent since we formed government.

The 2023-24 budget includes 503 million of direct provincial support to municipalities, an increase of 54.5 per cent or 12.2 per cent . . . 54.5 million — I've got too many numbers here, Mr. Speaker — or 12.2 per cent over last year's budget. That includes the revenue sharing but also infrastructure and a number of grants and initiatives from across government.

This budget includes 249.1 million in targeted funding for First Nations and Métis people and organizations, an increase of 6.8 per cent from last year. This includes funding for First Nations economic development, First Nations policing initiatives, treaty land entitlement, training initiatives, and many other important programs and partnerships with First Nations and Métis people.

Mr. Speaker, a growing economy and strong finances helped to keep life affordable for Saskatchewan people. Saskatchewan has among the lowest personal taxes in the country. A Saskatchewan family of four with \$100,000 in total income pays \$2,443 less in combined provincial tax and sales tax in 2023 than they did in 2007. Overall Saskatchewan is the most affordable place in Canada for a family of four when taxes, utilities, and housing costs combined are compared across the country.

A family with two adults, two dependent children, owning their own house with annual family income of 75,000 or an income of 100,000 or an income of 125,000 pay the lowest total amount in Canada for taxes, utilities, and housing. Keeping life affordable for Saskatchewan people, that is growth that works for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is building Saskatchewan with 3.7 billion to build schools, hospitals, highways, and other important projects needed in a growing province. There is 337.6 million for health care capital, a \$181 million increase over last year's budget. This includes 98.6 million for the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital, 38 million for the Weyburn General Hospital replacement, 20 million for La Ronge long-term care, and 10 million for specialized long-term care bed replacements.

It also includes 10 million for urgent care centres in Regina and Saskatoon, 10 million for Grenfell long-term care and 2.6 million for planning for a number of projects, including Rosthern Hospital, Battlefords District Care Centre, and an integrated care facility in Esterhazy. This budget includes 500,000 to continue planning for the replacement of the Yorkton Regional Health Centre.

In 2023-24 our government will invest 776 million into operating, maintaining, building, and improving the province's roads and highways through the Ministry of Highways. This includes over 1000 kilometres of improvements to provincial highways for a total of 4600 kilometres of highways improved over the past four years. Within this year's improvements there will be additional investment in gravel, pavement, and road maintenance in northern Saskatchewan to support the growing forestry industry.

That puts us on track to meet our growth plan commitment to upgrade and build 10 000 kilometres of provincial highway by 2030. With this year's budget, more than 12 billion has been invested into transportation infrastructure since 2008, improving more than 19 400 kilometres of provincial highway.

This budget includes 152.3 million for education capital. The 2023-24 budget includes 115.7 million to support the ongoing planning and construction of 15 new schools and the renovation of five existing schools that have been announced in the previous budgets. There is 4.4 million to begin planning five new school capital projects, including a new kindergarten to grade 12 school to replace and consolidate the elementary school in Carlyle, and a new K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] francophone school in Prince Albert. As well there is 16 million, an increase of 4 million, to buy or move relocatable classrooms. Since 2008, approximately 2.4 billion has been committed to build 60 new schools and to undertake 30 major renovation projects in our education sector to support our students.

It also includes 97.4 million for courts and corrections capital, including 75.4 million for the continued construction of the Saskatoon remand centre. There is funding in this budget for the planning and design work for the Saskatchewan Polytechnic campus renewal.

In 2023-24 Crown corporations will invest 2.1 billion into capital, including 1.2 billion by SaskPower, 341.2 million by SaskEnergy, and 412.7 million by SaskTel, mainly to deploy fibre to rural customers and modernization through the rollout of

SaskTel's 5G network.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, all of those projects and construction activity is on top of the 80 major projects totalling 32 billion of private sector investment right here in Saskatchewan. More investment, more construction, more jobs, and that's growth that works for everyone.

Saskatchewan's population is at an all-time high, growing faster than at any time since the early days of our province. Our province has what the world needs, and our economy is leading the nation. Our government's goal and the goal of this budget is to ensure that that growth continues and that it leads to a better quality of life for the more than 1.2 million people who now call Saskatchewan home.

More people, more jobs, more opportunities, more investment, more exports in a growing economy. More doctors, more nurses, and more surgeries. More students, more schools, and more affordable child care. Strong financial management, a balanced budget, and paying down debt. Building schools, building highways, and building hospitals. Safer families and safer communities. More support for seniors, for young people, and for people with disabilities. A growing economy, a brighter future, and a growing province whose best days are still ahead. Mr. Speaker, that's growth that works for everyone.

I move, seconded by the member from Kindersley:

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

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance, and seconded by the member from Kindersley:

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

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you. Well for the rest of the story here, Mr. Speaker, our Assembly is filled today with people and leaders from across Saskatchewan, here on Treaty 4 territory and the homeland of the Métis.

It's a wonderful thing, leaders that care deeply about their province, people of many cultures, many faiths, diverse sectors, and industries. I see community builders, volunteers, public servants that have served this province for decades. I see producers, risk-takers, hard workers, leaders in labour, leaders in local business, educators, and those that serve in health care — people of varying political persuasions. Of course, not all will see eye to eye on everything. We all have our differences. But we can share this special place, your legislature, because we believe in democracy, because we believe in this great province.

And as we gather today in the people's House to present and debate a budget, whether heaping praise or offering critique, we can't forget how grateful we need to be for this opportunity, for this province, and for this country. Criticizing a sitting government at their budget presentation is a privilege not enjoyed the world over. And I'll be heaping buckets of fresh praise on this

government in a moment.

But before we begin, let us take a moment to address what the people of Ukraine are facing, what Ukrainian-Canadians are facing as a result of Putin's unforgivable invasion. It's beyond description. Countless lives lost. The families uprooted. Cities knocked to the ground. But we must not look away. There's great hope to be found in the resolve and strength of the Ukrainian people. And on this, we must stand united for however long it takes.

[15:00]

Now for the heaping of praise. I'll cut to the chase. This is an out-of-touch budget from an out-of-touch government that doesn't rise to the occasion, that doesn't meet the moment. Plain and simple. This is a government flush with cash, sitting on mountains of resource revenues. And those resource revenues belong to the people of Saskatchewan. And the people deserve to benefit in a fair way. But that's simply not on under this government and in this budget.

Just take the generational cost-of-living crisis. The challenge facing so many. Folks who have paid their bills on time are struggling to do so with these power rate hikes, the energy bill hikes. Three increases in the span of eight months from a government flush with cash that campaigned on the promise of lower power rates. Yet there's no relief on this front. No cancelling of the big power and energy bill hikes, as we've been calling for, hikes that are serious hardship for households and local businesses. Not to mention no relief at the pumps.

No rollback of the PST expansion, the new taxes and fee hikes they nonsensically imposed on people last year. Or those from a few years back, when that government saw it fit to hit Saskatchewan people and businesses with the biggest tax hike in Saskatchewan's history, costing the average family a thousand dollars more each and every year on the new PST alone, in the back pages of the budget book reported by that government. No serious cost-of-living measures whatsoever.

The increases to SAID and SIS [Saskatchewan income support] benefits for the most vulnerable — well that's something we've been calling for, for years to be sure. But an increase of a buck a day? A buck a day does little to help those impoverished and those marginalized, those doing all they can with fixed incomes right now, just working to keep themselves in a home and their head above water.

Many that have been forced into homelessness as a result of the choices of this government and their inadequate, failed, flawed new program. Folks on fixed incomes took their concerns to the legislature just a few days ago. Rent, power and energy bills, the outrageous cost of food and fuel — all the worse if you are the lowest income earner in the province. They just can't keep up. And a buck-a-day increase to an inadequate and broken program doesn't cut it.

Even when it comes to action on grocery and meat pricing, calls that we've heard from the stock growers and those in the livestock sector, this is a government doing nothing, rejecting our calls for an investigation and action that could tackle the anti-competitive out-of-province meat packing industry, to help

deliver fairness for our hard-hit livestock producers, our beef producers, as well as for consumers.

On front after front, it defies belief that doing nothing and adding more taxes and costs is this government's plan to help out the cost-of-living crisis. Over half of people in this province say they're worse off this year than they were last year. Only 15 per cent say they're getting ahead. Folks in Saskatchewan report the second-highest levels of financial insecurity in Canada. And this is that government's response. This is an out-of-touch budget from an out-of-touch government, and it's not just the cost of living.

Let's look at health care. Our health care system is on the verge of collapse. And with their sky-high resource revenues, the government had a real chance to bring something forward, an ambitious plan for our health system. They failed. There's no primary care reform, no funding to support family docs. Not much for targets. Not much for timelines. Just plowing ahead with the same old plan that the Provincial Auditor lambasted.

The same old plan that folks in the health care sector say is weak and seriously lacking in ambition. And even if the government fulfills their health plan to a T, it'd still be 1,000 health workers short. For months, health care workers and professionals have called for an innovative and ambitious budget that supports our health system and the people working in it, and that has to start with respect from their government.

Instead we got a budget, when it comes to health care, that has wider gaps than a hospital gown. This budget will hardly begin to help the women who've been forced to give birth on the side of the road, because their local hospital was closed by this government. This budget will hardly begin to help the seniors waiting 10, 20 hours to get a bed in our ERs.

This budget is further proof of how out of touch this government has become. As for our schools, the minister likes to talk about record funding. Every year, record funding. That's like saying you paid a record amount for groceries this year, more than you did in years past. Meanwhile you had to cut the vegetables and the beef and all the good stuff, Mr. Speaker. But when you do the math and account for inflation, enrolment growth, and contracts, school divisions will be short millions of dollars and classrooms will only be getting bigger and students left with fewer supports at a time our classrooms need a boost after being handed the biggest cut to per-student funding in the nation in the past few years from that government.

This budget is not even status quo so will cause further cuts, strain, and chaos in our classrooms. It's indefensible. This government is throwing tens of millions into a new online school though that nobody called for — you know, they love those pet projects — all while schools organize bottle drives to pay for basic operations and programming. Talk about out of touch, Mr. Speaker.

And neither will this budget help post-secondary university students staring down yet another large tuition rate hike stacked up on top of a generational cost-of-living challenge, you know. And the member from Kindersley can heckle, but the folks looking to come out of Kindersley to access education aren't going to be impressed with the price they're going to have to pay

for that education. It'll be an absolute barrier that prevents many from pursuing their studies, their dreams, their potential.

And shortchanging the education of students today and denying them the opportunity doesn't just cost students their potential, it costs our province its potential too. Strong universities, post-secondary, and training are one of the key ingredients for a strong economic future, for job growth — to the minister — for job growth and to address the labour force to ensure we have it for today and tomorrow.

And the budget fails to undo past damaging decisions that could have helped to fire up our economy, to get it back up on its feet, to create the good-paying jobs that people can count on. The statistics don't lie, nor do local businesses that are here in this Assembly that know sticking the PST on construction labour, construction projects, as this government did in 2017, was a gut punch to growth — the epitome of a job-killing tax. That tax has driven up costs on projects for families, for homes, for business expansions and economic projects, and for municipalities and the property tax payers that are paying the increasing bill. The PST has driven up costs, driven away investment, and driven away jobs and opportunity. Not scrapping this job-killing tax is a lost opportunity that comes with so many costs.

And according to the Sask Party's own figures there in the budget book, they're now disclosing that they won't come anywhere close to their 2030 jobs target. Five thousand jobs this year, 5,000 jobs next year, and way off already. It doesn't cut it. People deserve better. You'd think the government with the worst job record in Canada might try to right the ship with a bold vision for more jobs and bigger paycheques. Not these folks. This tired and out-of-touch government is completely out of gas, and this budget confirms it.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on, but the point is this: this budget won't capitalize on Saskatchewan's potential. Saskatchewan people and leaders have the talent, the work ethic, the right ideas to set us in the right direction. What we need is a government that doesn't get in the way.

Like I said, under this Premier we're dead last in terms of jobs growth; second last on economic growth, an actual decline; dead last on average annual building permit increases; back of the pack on the retention of immigrants and wage growth. This is an undeniable record of failing to deliver economically. The members opposite won't even admit it, let alone have a plan to fix it.

The stats don't lie. Cuts to per-student funding in classrooms, the worst in Canada. Rates of interpersonal violence, worst in Canada. Child poverty, worst in Canada. Minimum wage, lowest in Canada. And a suicide and overdose crisis impacting far, far too many families.

Let me be clear. And I love this province. I'm proud of this province. But this government is not delivering, not holding up their end of the bargain, you know, and I think folks in this Assembly will see the arrogance on display right here and now today. And it costs the province and its people in so many ways.

A measure of society, and certainly a budget and a government, is how the most vulnerable are treated. This is a continuation of

the callous disregard on this front, and the choices that have caused too many to suffer cruel indignity — denied the basic hope, opportunity, and humanity deserved. And whether it's economic opportunity or extending hope and opportunity to our most vulnerable, Saskatchewan is too great a province to be dead last or second last or worst west of the Maritimes.

From a fiscal perspective, this budget continues to pile on costs for this government's record of financial mismanagement, a record of failing to balance the books and get the job done during the best days, the boom years, while signing people on to the costs of mismanaged projects and scandal, piling on debt — more than tripling the debt. And the debt continues to increase in this budget, and in four years it will be at \$37 billion. And then making people to pay the price.

[15:15]

It's been a story of tax and squander by this government, a short-sighted approach that costs us more. This is on full display with the new wasteful spending in a misguided project like the government's new revenue agency, which will cost taxpayers and businesses more than \$260 million more over the next 10 years to deliver a less effective, more costly, and cumbersome tax system that will drive up compliance costs for local businesses and force them to file twice, at a time that the 42,000 businesses in this province are already facing so many challenges and costs. It defies logic. And we've seen and continue to see this on too many fronts by this government.

It should go without saying that even though this government is flush with cash, it's inexcusable to recklessly waste public money. It costs everyone. People have seen this movie before and they're already paying the price.

Let me be clear. We have all the ingredients to grow, progress, and thrive in a big way. Our resources, the work ethic, the talent and ingenuity of people, producers, and businesses is unmatched in the world. The people of Saskatchewan, though, deserve a government and a budget that offers them a needed break and that extends that promise, steps up to the challenges, and seizes the opportunities.

And most importantly, a budget made by the people of Saskatchewan for the people of Saskatchewan. A budget informed by consultation, by your ideas and concerns, a budget that's in touch with reality, that rises to the occasion and meets the moment. As my long-time friend, colleague, now boss, the Leader of the Opposition often says, we're truly stronger together.

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

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

**Motion for Resumption of Budget Debate**

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have near 50 members who can't wait to address some of those comments, Mr. Speaker. But first I want to invite colleagues to congratulate the Minister of Finance on delivering a remarkable budget on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. And with that I would move:

That debate on the motion "That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government" be resumed on Thursday, March 23rd, 2023.

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

That debate on the motion "That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government" be resumed on Thursday, March 23rd, 2023.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — I move that this House do now adjourn.

**The Speaker:** — Before I place the question on adjournment, I want to first of all say thank you to all our guests who have joined us today and for your co-operation observing the rules of the Assembly. And now I would like to extend an invitation to our guests to join the members for tea in the Legislative Library to your right as you leave the Assembly and in room 218 to the left.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:19.]

# GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

## CABINET MINISTERS

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**Premier**  
**President of the Executive Council**  
**Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs**

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Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement  
Minister Responsible for the  
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Minister Responsible for  
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Saskatchewan Government Insurance  
Minister Responsible for  
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