



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

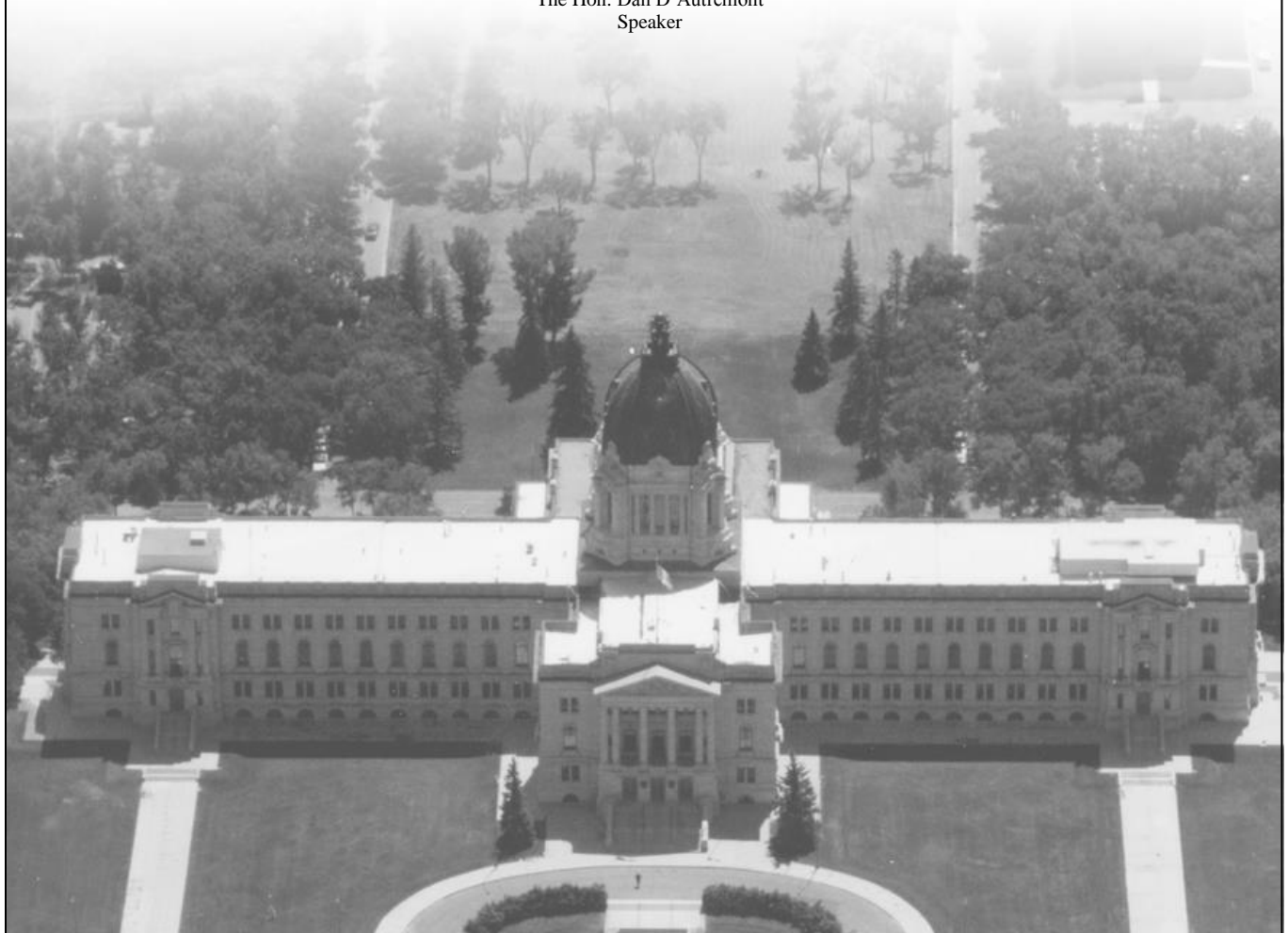
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Dan D'Autremont
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Dan D'Autremont

Premier — Hon. Brad Wall

Leader of the Opposition — Cam Broten

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Broten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Campeau, Jennifer	SP	Saskatoon Fairview
Chartier, Danielle	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Cox, Herb	SP	The Battlefords
D'Autremont, Hon. Dan	SP	Cannington
Docherty, Mark	SP	Regina Coronation Park
Doherty, Hon. Kevin	SP	Regina Northeast
Doke, Larry	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Hon. Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Hon. Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harrison, Hon. Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Hon. Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Hutchinson, Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, D.F. (Yogi)	SP	Wood River
Jurgens, Victoria	SP	Prince Albert Northcote
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lawrence, Greg	SP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Makowsky, Gene	SP	Regina Dewdney
Marchuk, Russ	SP	Regina Douglas Park
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Hon. Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Paul	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Moe, Scott	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Parent, Roger	SP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Phillips, Kevin	SP	Melfort
Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Sproule, Cathy	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Steinley, Warren	SP	Regina Walsh Acres
Stewart, Hon. Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Tochor, Corey	SP	Saskatoon Eastview
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Vermette, Doyle	NDP	Cumberland
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Hon. Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Hon. Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, given . . . Oh, I should request leave for an extended introduction. I do so now.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, as someone charged with responsibility for this Legislative Building and the precinct, you will know as well as anyone in this Chamber today, that every day at the legislature is a special day, but some days are just a little bit more special than others.

Mr. Speaker, today the Leader of the Opposition, members of the Assembly joined by members of the Executive Council, former premiers, the Chief Justice, a number of special guests had the opportunity to go to a public hanging, as they say, Mr. Speaker. And the subject of the hanging, of course, made that original joke earlier this morning.

Mr. Speaker, in your gallery is Gordon Barnhart, Dr. Gordon Barnhart, the 20th Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan. He served in that capacity for six years. And we had the opportunity to unveil the portrait that will now be hung here at the legislature in perpetuity in the Qu'Appelle Gallery. And, Mr. Speaker, it was an opportunity to also say some well-deserved words about a great leader in the life of a province.

I will also note that Cyril Leeper, the portrait artist of considerable renown, has joined Dr. Barnhart today in your gallery, and we introduce him as well. Just by way of background, Mr. Leeper's work is not at all a stranger to this particular Assembly. He's a portrait artist originally from the great city of Saskatoon, now living in Ontario. And he has painted other Saskatchewan lieutenant governors, his subjects such as McIntosh, Johnson, Fedoruk. And he also painted the portrait of former premier, Grant Devine, Mr. Speaker. So we want to welcome Mr. Leeper as well, back to the Legislative Assembly here.

Dr. Barnhart's portrait will hang in the Qu'Appelle Gallery here at the Legislative Building, and we're proud that it will do so. The new portrait will be part of the Legislative Building art collection, which now has more than 200 pieces that also includes busts, sculptures, murals, and photographs.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Barnhart is very well known to all of us here, not just for his great work as Lieutenant Governor for six years,

but for his time as Clerk of this particular Assembly, for his time as Clerk of the Senate of Canada, for his time at the University of Saskatchewan — almost 45 years of public service to the people of our province, and indeed for that time in the Senate, to the people of Canada as well.

He was born and raised in Saltcoats, Saskatchewan. I think he might frequent the same barber as the member for Saltcoats, Mr. Speaker, on our side of the House. He is an historian and a recognized expert on the Canadian parliamentary process. His extensive experience in government not only includes his work in this Chamber but also, as I've mentioned before, as a Clerk of the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, we all have gotten to know him personally. We're aware of his passion for public service. We're aware of the example that he has set for all of us. We're aware of his courage in office when he was able to let young children — when he was discussing the importance of literacy — in on the fact that, as a young person growing up in Saskatchewan, he struggled with reading, Mr. Speaker. That is the kind of courage and leadership that has benefited this province greatly, especially for his time as Lieutenant Governor.

We want to thank him. Though his wife Naomi's not here and we want to, through him, thank her as well for their great service to the province of Saskatchewan, to the people of Saskatchewan. It continues today. He has been a great assist to the government in historical matters in terms of this precinct, in terms of that Walter Scott statue that now stands in front of the Legislative Building. He has also provided good advice to the government on other historical matters, and he does so again in the spirit of public service.

So, Mr. Speaker, once again it is a great privilege to, on behalf of members in this House, welcome Dr. Barnhart to his Legislative Assembly, and in so doing on the day that his portrait was indeed hung here for the permanent collection, to thank him for his public service and to offer him every good wish for the future.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to join in and offer a word of thanks to Dr. Gordon Barnhart. As we had the very fitting tribute this morning to the work that Dr. Barnhart has done over many decades, Mr. Speaker, we're reminded of his solid, very solid track record of public service in a variety of roles. And while the portrait is mostly about his work as a Lieutenant Governor and serving here in the province, we know Dr. Barnhart's activities with the youth in the province and in other jurisdictions as well is long standing and is making a long-lasting influence on our province.

And I too, Mr. Speaker, would like to join in offering a word of thanks to the artist, Dr. Cyril Leeper, for once again doing a fine job and adding to the beauty of this building. Mr. Speaker, I ask all member to join me in welcoming these two guests to the Assembly.

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

Health.

Hon. Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce a delegation from Borden, Saskatchewan: Mayor David Buckingham, Deputy Mayor Jamie Brandrick, Councillor Tom Redhead, and Chief Administration Officer Barry Hvidston. And please join me in welcoming them to the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my privilege to introduce to the Assembly, or to you and to everyone in the Assembly, a great group of students from the Humboldt Collegiate Institute. And they are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. David Millette, who comes each and every year with a delegation to this Assembly. So I'm not sure how many years now that Mr. Millette has brought his students to this Assembly. I'm looking forward to meeting with them, and I would welcome everyone to welcome them to their Assembly.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the legislature, it's my privilege to welcome another special delegation here today, some folks who are here with the consumer advocacy group, Where's My Midwife? Saskatchewan. We have with us today Kim and Chloe Smith, Julian Wotherspoon and Sullivan. And Sullivan may want to participate in the proceedings, Mr. Speaker, so you might have to give him a word or two. And as well, Rhonda Young-Pilon. So with that I would like to ask my colleagues to welcome these folks to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce 35 grade 12 and grade 8 students from Langenburg School. They're accompanied by their teachers, Fallon Prince and Kristine Neaustaeter.

Mr. Speaker, I might add, too, that the grade 12s won't be able to take advantage of this, but I know the grade 8s will, that there's a new school in the works in Langenburg, Saskatchewan. And I know all of us are going to be looking forward to that opening. So I ask all members to join with me in welcoming these students and their teachers from Langenburg.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to members of the Assembly, individuals seated in your gallery. I'm speaking about some royalty. There they are up there looking regal, Mr. Speaker. I'm speaking of Walter Ostanek, Canada's polka king, with 21 Grammy nominations and three Grammy wins to his credit, along with 98 record albums and a star on Canada's Walk of Fame.

He's joined by Sal Garcia, one of the world's premier tenor sax

players and percussionists, Mr. Speaker, a record and television producer, a CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System] recording artist, first-call session player, along with his brother played 51 years in Las Vegas, Mr. Speaker, and I should also point out, a martial arts expert who provided martial arts training to Elvis Presley and many other headliners in Las Vegas. And they of course are joined by Brian Sklar, Saskatchewan's polka king. They're here, Mr. Speaker, to shoot season eight of *PolkaRama*. And if you could join me in giving them a big e-i-e-i-o to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of education. And we know that education is one of the most vital services that government provides to its citizens, and that this government has failed to deliver a long-term plan and vision and the necessary resources to prioritize the delivery of educational excellence. And we know that we must build the best education system for today and for Saskatchewan's future. I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on this government to immediately prioritize education by laying out a long-term vision and plan with the necessary resources to provide the best quality education for Saskatchewan that reflects Saskatchewan's demographic and population changes, that is based on proven educational best practices, that is developed through consultation with the education sector, and that builds strong educational infrastructure to serve students and communities long into the future.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, people signing this petition come from Melfort, Carrot River, and La Ronge. I do so present. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition. Many northern residents benefited from the rental purchase option program, also known as RPO. These families were very proud homeowners in their communities. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this government stubbornly ignored the call to maintain this program. Instead it cancelled the RPO. That means the dream of home ownership is destroyed for many families in the North. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly cause the Sask Party government to restore the RPO rent-to-own option for responsible renters in northern Saskatchewan, allowing them the dignity of owning their own homes and building communities in our province's beautiful North.

It is signed by many good people of northern Saskatchewan. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to stand once again to present a petition on highways. This particular petition is Highway 908, the only road to and from the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse from the main highway, 155. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take immediately the following action, to cause the provincial government to commit to repairing and upgrading of 908.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm presenting five pages of petitions here, and all, most of the petitioners that have signed these pages are primarily from Ile-a-la-Crosse. And I so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise to present a petition for real action on climate change. And the folks who have signed this petition wish to bring to the attention of the Assembly the following: that Saskatchewan produces the highest greenhouse gas emissions per capita in all of Canada; and Saskatchewan's emissions have continued to grow to 74 million megatonnes as reported by Environment Canada in October 2013 and show no signs of decreasing; that slashing programs such as the Go Green Fund and the EnerGuide for Houses energy efficiency program have set the province on a backwards course; and that since 2009 the Government of Saskatchewan has reduced climate change funding by 83 per cent, including another 35 per cent cut in the 2014-15 budget. I'd like to read the prayer. It reads that the people who have signed this:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan enact a real plan and allocate appropriate funding in the provincial budget to tackle climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, helping families transition to energy-efficient homes, and encouraging everyone in the province to take real action to protect the environment.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by folks from Vanscoy, Delisle, and Biggar, and I do so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Missing Persons Week

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks the beginning of the province's second Missing Persons Week. While we are all saddened by the circumstances that make it necessary, I am proud to stand today and mark the commencement of the week, as it is one way in which our province's government, police services, and community organizations can maintain awareness about this complex and troubling issue.

In addition and perhaps more importantly, the designation is a signal of support to the families of those missing that we stand by their side in action and spirit and keep their loved ones at the

forefront of our thoughts. At this time, I would like to say once more that we are grateful for the work of the provincial partnership committee on missing persons in their efforts to address this issue.

At an event this morning attended by the Minister of Justice, the committee announced that they will be planting a tree in Wascana Centre as an ongoing symbol of loss and hope in recognition of those who are missing. Our government remains supportive of the committee's work as we also remain supportive of a national inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women. Until then however, our province will continue to work with police and community partners to find resolution for missing persons cases in the hope that they might reach a point of peace.

I invite all members to join me as we recognize Missing Persons Week.

[13:45]

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

International Day of the Midwife

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May 5th is the International Day of the Midwife. I call on members to join me in recognizing the role of midwives as key partners in curbing maternal, newborn, and infant mortality worldwide and here at home.

This year's International Day of the Midwife carries the sub-theme Midwives: Changing the World One Family at a Time. Midwives provide important care that changes the lives of mothers, babies, and families. Today is a day to underline the importance of midwives and their work.

More than 350,000 women and 2 million infants around the world die each year from complications in pregnancy and childbirth. The education and experience of midwives is essential to tackling issues in maternal and newborn child health. Midwives also provide options for women and families challenged by the lack of services in rural, remote and, particularly, Aboriginal communities across Canada.

The International Day of the Midwife is an important opportunity to raise awareness of the benefits of midwifery to the public and to policy-makers. It is positive that women in three health regions in Saskatchewan have access to midwifery services if they choose. But there are still so many women and families who could benefit greatly from midwifery care but don't because this government has not taken a lead in expanding services to ensure equitable access across the province.

Mr. Speaker, I call on members to join me in recognizing the role of the midwife in building healthy communities and in celebrating the benefits midwives have provided for women, children, and families across the world. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatchewan

Rivers.

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is International Day of the Midwife. Midwives offer a valuable service by providing increased choice to expectant mothers.

Midwifery services have expanded in our province since the first clinic opened in Saskatoon in 2009. Since then, midwives have participated in the delivery of almost 1,400 babies, and the families involved express a high level of satisfaction with midwifery services.

Mr. Speaker, our government continues to support the growth of midwifery in our province. We provide annualized funding of 2.2 million to support these important services. Return-in-service bursaries are available for training and recruitment, and 12 candidates have received bursaries to date. Last year we provided a program in Saskatoon that will allow a qualified nurse or paramedic to take the spot of the second midwife, which will increase access to these services.

Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to support services that provide safe, high-quality care to people in our province. Today I want to thank our midwives in our province for their great contributions to the health and well-being of women and their families. I ask my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to join me in recognizing these valuable health professionals. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Hunger Awareness Week

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today on to May 11th is Hunger Awareness Week. Close to 850,000 Canadians use food banks each month, and this is the time to break the silence surrounding hunger in Canada. This year the campaign aims to highlight the voices of hunger, and Canadians are being asked to tell their personal stories to raise awareness about food security.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to highlight the story here in the province. Despite our prosperity, we have tens of thousands of people who are not getting enough food. In Saskatchewan there are almost 27 per cent of these people utilizing the food bank than they were in 2008 and, of those, 44 per cent are children.

We see this growing problem across Canada's northern and Aboriginal communities. In 2011 off-reserve Aboriginal households were twice as likely as other Canadian households to be food insecure. In Canada, households with children have a higher prevalence of food insecurity than households without children, and women are shown to have less food security than men. Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable that Canadian's health and well-being is being compromised for the lack of food and our most vulnerable citizens are struggling to meet even their most basic needs for survival.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan food banks have been leaders in tackling issues around hunger and poverty in this province. And we need to join them in addressing the roots of hunger and making it a thing of the past. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Campaign for Real Beauty

Ms. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend, the member from Regina Plains and myself proudly hosted and sponsored our third annual self-esteem workshop for young girls and their female mentors. The workshop is part of the Dove Real Beauty campaign. The event was held at the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] Heritage Centre in Regina and was well attended by over 235 moms and their daughters.

The purpose of this workshop is to show both young girls and their female mentors — whether it is to be their mothers, their sisters, their aunts, or their grandmas — that girls can have a positive impact in their schools, their communities, families and, more importantly, among their peers. It encourages young women to become a leader in their own life and helps them prepare for those roles of leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I am passionate about this, and I was so proud to see so many women and girls come to this event and discover that they too can be leaders. I know that if we have strong girls, we have strong women. And if we have strong women, we have strong communities. And that's very important to all of us.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking Dove for their support and my colleague from Regina Plains for co-sponsoring this life-changing workshop. I would also like to thank all the girls and their moms and their mentors who attended this workshop. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saskatchewan Habitat Day

Ms. Jurgens: — I'm pleased to rise today to advise all members that May 2nd was Saskatchewan Habitat Day. In my community of Prince Albert and in all habitat communities across the province, this day was selected to honour the work Habitat for Humanity does in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan recognizes the continuing need for affordable housing. Through our partnership with Habitat for Humanity, we continue to support families in realizing their dream of home ownership.

Since 2009 the Government of Saskatchewan through Sask Housing Corporation has committed \$7.85 million to Habitat. Mr. Speaker, our funding has supported the builds of 97 homes that are complete or are under construction in 10 Saskatchewan communities. In the 2014-15 budget, we committed an additional \$750,000 to help build 12 more homes throughout Saskatchewan. Through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, we provide \$65,000 per home in funding now. That's up from the 50,000 per home we provided to March 2014. Let me remind our members that each family served by Habitat worked incredibly hard to make their dream a reality by putting in 500 hours of work.

Mr. Speaker, we are making good progress in affordable

housing in this province. Our work with Habitat is just one way we continue to deliver on our Saskatchewan plan for growth commitments. Affordable home ownership is the dream of Habitat for Humanity in action and the reason we all celebrate Habitat Day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure.

Wings for Life World Run

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's in pleasure, great pleasure, and quite frankly in a lot of pain I stand here today and talk about a very unique event that happened on May the 4th around the world. The Red Bull Wings for Life World Run took place in 34 locations around the world: 32 countries, 6 continents, Mr. Speaker, and 13 time zones.

This was a run that everyone in the world started at the same time, and it was to raise money for spinal cord research, to run for those that couldn't. Mr. Speaker, at the same time around the world, at 4 o'clock in the morning in Saskatoon, which was the only location in Canada, 35,400 people started running a race which included 171 here in Saskatchewan. Thirty minutes after those people left the start line, a chase car would come up and start travelling the course and, as it went by runners, they were eliminated, to have one runner left in the world, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the worldwide winner was Lemawork Ketema, an Ethiopian who ran 78.5 kilometres, Mr. Speaker. The female winner from Norway was Elise Molvik who ran 54. The Canadian winner, Mr. Speaker, from Saskatoon was Ryan King who ran forty-six and three-quarter kilometres, Mr. Speaker; and Chrissy Magnuson who ran 32 kilometres.

I want to thank Mayor Atchison from the city of Saskatoon and all their workers as well as the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure to make this really unique event happen, Mr. Speaker. It raised millions of dollars. And we look forward to them coming back to Saskatchewan and using Saskatoon as the start point for the Canadian race into the future. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

First Nations Education

Mr. Broten: — We know that First Nations education is absolutely crucial to our province's success, both for today and for decades to come. We believe that the federal government's proposed First Nations education Act has some good aspects to it, but it also has some concerning aspects to it, and we think it's wise that the federal government has put the legislation on hold due to the many concerns that have been raised about it.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier: what is the government's position on the First Nations education Act?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, in terms of the Act's desire to improve accountability and raise standards for the education of young First Nations Canadians, that principle is strongly supported by this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We do know that in the wake of the resignation of the national chief, Shawn Atleo, my understanding is that this day the federal minister, Minister Valcourt, has withdrawn . . . or not withdrawn perhaps but put the bill on hold. I know that our ministers responsible for Education and First Nations and Métis Relations have a good working relationship with the federal minister and will be in close contact with the federal government.

The principles of the legislation, we support. There's been concerns from First Nations about the amount of consultation that went into that legislation. Those would be reasonable concerns, Mr. Speaker, and we would be willing to give voice to those as well, as we interact with the federal government on the matter.

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

Mr. Broten: — Major concerns have been raised about how the First Nations education Act gives the federal government all the authority but no responsibility while giving First Nations all the responsibility but very little authority. There are concerns that there is no recognition in the legislation about inherent and treaty rights to education and about funding not flowing until 2016. The bill has some good aspects, but it has its concerning aspects as well.

It's important, Mr. Speaker, for the federal government to listen to First Nations and to work together to get the legislation right. And it's important for our province to encourage that because of the importance of First Nations' education today and into the future for Saskatchewan. My question, Mr. Speaker, for the Premier: has he reached out to the Prime Minister on this vitally important issue for Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, over time we've had discussions with the federal government on the importance of Aboriginal education across the country and specifically in the province, with Saskatchewan having on a per capita basis one of the highest populations of First Nations people.

And, Mr. Speaker, we know in Saskatchewan that we've seen great improvement in terms of Aboriginal engagement in the economy, in the reduction of the unemployment rate for First Nations people, but there is still a great gap frankly between First Nations and the overall unemployment rate. We know the key to closing the gap is education, so yes, this has been a priority in terms of our dealings with the federal government, in terms of the dealings of the ministers as well of the Crown with the federal government.

We noted a few budgets back from the feds, in part I think because of provincial intervention that we participated in, there was an increased investment in on-reserve education. We were worried about the deployment of the funds, but supported the advancement of those funds. We also know that with this new approach to on-reserve education, the federal government was going to come with some more dollars. There's a debate about

whether there's enough of that. We're doing an analysis on that point as well.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, for the Government of Saskatchewan, is that this is a priority issue for us. The principles of this legislation though are important in terms of what the federal government was trying to achieve and why the former National Chief Atleo was very supportive of the directional changes in the federal legislation. We support those as well. We will now take the time to engage on the Act again, now that the federal minister as of today has put the legislation on hold.

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

Staffing for Senior and Long-Term Care

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard a lot of concern about staffing levels in seniors' care facilities, and we've heard how chronic short-staffing is negatively affecting the quality of care that seniors in Saskatchewan receive. We've heard stories, Mr. Speaker, of seniors being forced to wake up at 5 in the morning, of seniors, Mr. Speaker, being forced to soil themselves because there's no one there to help them to the bathroom. We've heard of some seniors not even receiving a weekly bath. And the latest numbers, Mr. Speaker, on staffing levels released by this government show how huge the problem of chronic short-staffing really is. My question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Premier: can he confirm that two-thirds of seniors' care facilities have staffing vacancies?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

[14:00]

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly with respect to long-term care facilities across this province, this government over the last seven years that we've served on this side of the House, we've invested significantly, both in the capital side in terms of long-term care, building 13 new long-term care facilities, embarking upon the replacement of three facilities in the city of Swift Current.

We've also put tremendous supports to maintaining facilities. We're also putting dollars into front-line staff. So within regional health authority budgets over the last seven years, we've seen significant increases to the point where RHA [regional health authority] budgets are up over 50 per cent in those seven years overall in global funding, which is translated into more than 700 full-time equivalents added to the long-term care staffing complement, despite the fact that the number of beds haven't changed much in the last seven years.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the question was to the Premier, whether he can confirm that two-thirds of seniors' care facilities have staffing vacancies.

When this session began last fall, we put forward written questions about health care staffing vacancies, and it was a long six months, Mr. Speaker, for this government to provide us with some information. What those answers show is that two-thirds

of seniors' care facilities in the province have staffing vacancies. And that's concerning on its own, but it's especially concerning when those vacancies are happening within the context, Mr. Speaker, of desperately needed staff and chronic short-staffing all of the time, a staffing complement that is already far too inadequate, Mr. Speaker. And the urgent business cases that were put forward by care facilities show a desperate need for new staff.

But this government, Mr. Speaker, isn't even addressing and filling the current vacancies. My question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker: why not?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, certainly this government has invested significantly when it comes to staffing within all of our health care facilities. That's why we have indicated, that I've indicated that the regional health authority budgets is up significantly over the last seven years, far and away above the rate of inflation or contract settlements. That has allowed us to hire additional positions, whether that be to acute care or into long-term care.

Mr. Speaker, at any given time there may be vacancies within a regional health authority, regional health authorities. That may be because people are changing positions; they're moving on to other positions; they're moving into management; they may be retiring. Certainly we know that as of the date when the members opposite asked the questions, for example, within . . . Care aids within regional health authorities represented about 3 per cent of the regional health authority workforce. That is not different or much of a change from when the members opposite would have been in government. And it's important to know that in some of these facilities it would be a very small number of vacancies.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, if the minister has more current and up-to-date information, he should table that in the Assembly. It took them six long months to respond to the questions. And if the minister and this government thinks they're on the right track, the right track when it comes to addressing staffing shortages, chronic staffing shortages within the health care system, Mr. Speaker, they are dreaming. It's the Saskatoon Health Region that put forward a request for 450 care aids. Do you know how many they got, Mr. Speaker? Nineteen. Only 19.

Here's what the report on the CEO [chief executive officer] tour and the report from the urgent requests say, Mr. Speaker. Some quotes from the state of, about the state of care. The staffing levels are deplorable. Need more people to answer buzzers. Average wait time is 40 minutes; someone actually timed it. Residents notice staff shortages and often have to wait up to 30 minutes after they ring their call bell. Continent residents have soiled themselves because of it. Residents don't get their teeth cleaned regularly. Shaving is rushed, causing neck rash. Only bathed once per week.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier: has he heard enough?

Has he heard enough to admit that it was a mistake to remove any sort of reference to adequate staffing from the seniors' care regulations?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, as I've said, there are 745 full-time equivalents within long-term care alone, knowing that the number of beds has not changed dramatically in the last seven years. So over 700 full-time equivalents more now today within the system that we are funding than when the members opposite were government.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could answer the fact that care aids, full-time care aids, 4,487 care aid positions under the NDP [New Democratic Party] in their last budget; last year's budget, 4,924, a 10 per cent increase. LPNs [licensed practical nurse] within long-term care, 521 in the last budget under the NDP — keeping in mind the number of beds had not changed, the number of residents have not changed — 521 LPNs in long-term care; last year's budget 716, a 37 per cent increase. And RNs, FTEs [full-time equivalent], 1,211; last year's budget 1,324, a 10 per cent increase. How the members opposite could ever say that we are understaffed when it comes to long-term care, looking at their record.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, when we hear stories of seniors being forced to soil themselves because of not enough staff, that is understaffing within long-term care facilities. When we hear stories, Mr. Speaker, of seniors who don't have the dignity and the care that they need, help with meals, help getting to the bathroom, help with the absolute basics, Mr. Speaker, that is a failure in care that this government is overseeing.

The information that this government released late last week shows 703 vacancies of front-line health care workers through our system — 345 RN vacancies, 96 LPN vacancies, and 262 care aid vacancies. And we know the Health Sciences Association, which has recently voted to strike, is frustrated with this government's refusal to release information about which positions it's leaving vacant intentionally because of the budget squeeze.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier: will he table today in the Assembly the most up-to-date information about staffing vacancies in health care in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly this government has acknowledged other work that we need do in long-term care. That's why we embarked on a series of steps over the last year to increase the accountability within long-term care, through the CEO tours, through the report that was issued, through the Urgent Issues Action Fund response by this government — I think a responsible response to the information that came forward.

But no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that this government has invested significantly, to the point where the registered nurses' regulatory body just in the last two weeks has indicated that we

have never been higher as a province when it comes to registered nurses in this province. Many of those have gone to long-term care. In fact it's up 9.3 per cent, when in fact the number of beds haven't changed in that time.

Mr. Speaker, that's why we have taken the step to put in additional dollars for both equipment and front-line staff within long-term care because we want to address the challenges that are faced in long-term care, knowing that there is more work to be done. But I will take the response of this side of the House versus the members opposite any day.

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

Utilization of Saskatoon City Hospital

Ms. Chartier: — During this session we've heard concerns from highly respected physicians, front-line staff, and a coroner's inquest jury about the underutilization of Saskatoon City Hospital. And we see in today's *StarPhoenix* a letter from retired RN Lorraine Roadhouse that says, "This hospital is still the best built state-of-the-art facility in Saskatoon, and it's sadly underused." Those are the concerns shared by most Saskatoon residents and many people throughout the province ever since this government closed City Hospital for acute care in 2008.

The emergency room at Saskatoon City Hospital is already shut down from 8:30 p.m. until 9 a.m. But now the opposition is hearing concerns that this government is seriously considering shutting down the emergency room at Saskatoon City Hospital entirely. To the minister: is there any truth to this?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, first of all to the members opposite, no, that is not the information that Saskatoon Health Region has provided to me in my capacity as Minister of Health. Certainly the CEO of the health region has indicated publicly that Saskatoon City Hospital is an important hospital for the people of Saskatoon that does, and despite what the member opposite would say, does currently provide for acute services including emergency services for part of the day.

But it is important to note that there were over 55 . . . nearly 5,500 in-patients at Saskatoon City Hospital in the last year, provided for 7,000 day surgeries, provided emergency care for 5,300 people, and ambulatory procedures of nearly 14,100 last year. City Hospital is important to the people of Saskatoon and will continue to be so.

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

Ms. Chartier: — We've been told by multiple sources that senior health region officials have recently refused to rule out a complete closure of City Hospital's emergency room. The people of Saskatoon and area deserve to know the truth from this government. They deserve to know if such a move is being considered. To the minister: will he guarantee today that Saskatoon City Hospital's emergency will remain open — yes or no?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it will remain open.

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

Social Housing

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The shortage of affordable housing in communities across the province is a major problem, and the government's new social housing policies are making it worse.

Because of the new age requirements for tenants, the Earl Grey Housing Authority recently had a one-bedroom unit sit vacant for close to six months despite having numerous calls from people desperately looking for a place to rent. And because of the new community market rent policy, the Earl Grey Housing Authority must charge \$800 per month. They say that is, and I quote, "far too high for a small village."

To the minister: why is this government, as a landlord, making it so hard for people to rent social housing units at affordable rates?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm really pleased that the member opposite is talking about affordable housing because it's something that our government takes very seriously.

We have the most social housing units of any place in Western Canada and the policies hadn't changed since the 1950s. So when we relooked at them, we realized that there were tenants in these social housing units that had . . . Fifteen of them were making over \$100,000 a year. And we had up to 800 spaces that we created because there were . . . had a rent cap of about \$800 a month.

Mr. Speaker, we know that in rural Saskatchewan there is need for affordable housing as well. We relooked at our policies and looked at what would be, something that would be suitable when we compare the fact that we have lights, power and lights and services are available within our units.

Mr. Speaker, our goal is to make sure that we have, that the houses are available to those most in need. Mr. Speaker, that is our goal, and we will continue to provide housing for people that are in need in our province.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well this is what the Earl Grey Housing Authority said last week when they wrote the minister. They say, and I quote, "For small communities like Earl Grey, housing is still beyond the reach for most non-seniors with low and moderate income, those that need it most."

The housing authority wanted to discuss these changes with the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation at a meeting in January, but they were told it wasn't acceptable. They write, and I quote

again, "We were told beforehand the policy we found most detrimental, community market rent, was not up for discussion." To the minister: why is this government not even willing to listen to very real concerns from those front-line workers about the impact its policies are having on Saskatchewan people?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I think the member opposite does know that there was meetings in January and that we actually did make a number of changes. In fact there was another level of housing that was acquired. Now we have A, B, C, D, and E for communities that have less than 300 people.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the work that we are doing and the chatting that we are having with area authorities meant that we looked at the rental units, and there was a decrease in all of the tiers so that it is more acceptable in the areas. We now have a maximum unit rent in each area, a discussion that we continue to have with our housing authorities.

The members opposite should know that there is 276 housing authorities in this province, and our goal is to make sure that people can receive a rent that is viable for them. Mr. Speaker, the number of people that are paying the maximum rent in this province is less than 9 per cent of the 18,000 units. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to speak with our housing authorities.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These are very real concerns being brought forward by the Earl Grey Housing Authority, and the minister ought to be listening to them and taking them seriously. The housing authority is concerned about the many people that they've had to turn away because of this government's new policies, and they outline the specific cases in their letter to the minister.

But they've also expressed concerns about the sustainability of the housing units because the government has slashed their improvement budget by 63 per cent. The government has decided it won't even be replacing closet doors anymore, but they suggest instead that they can use curtain rods and fabric.

To the minister: is she listening to these concerns from the housing authority or is she going to be stubbornly dismissing them as usual?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, first of all the members opposite should be aware that in our province, the people that are paying less than the maximum rent is less than 9 per cent of the people paying maximum rent.

And when it comes to maintenance, I'd really like to ensure that the members opposite can prove the numbers that they're talking about in the House because far too often they come forward and bring numbers that are based on nothing more than maybe something that they have dreamt about the night before.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is very, very important to our government to make sure that we are maintaining these units. In fact one of the things that we are doing is evaluating every one of the housing authorities that we have to ensure what actually is . . . the state that they're in. I'm very proud of the fact that by the end of May of this year, we're going to have evaluated every one of those units to know what type of maintenance is required so we know our ongoing needs.

Mr. Speaker, we have signed another agreement with the federal government where we can look at the social housing, another \$9.1 million from the federal government that we'll be matching to not only build affordable housing but to maintain the housing that we do have. Mr. Speaker, in rural Saskatchewan this is an important issue as it is in the urban centres.

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

Grain Transportation

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the federal government's hasty amendments to the legislation on the grain transportation crisis were ruled out of order. The government failed to get it right the first time around and then introduced amendments to their own bill too late. The feds were slapped on the wrist by the Speaker for not allowing proper debate and scrutiny. And this botched bill is just the latest in the series of many blunders that have characterized the federal government's handling of this grain transportation catastrophe.

Instead of demanding urgent action and putting pressure on the federal government to deliver last March, our provincial government has been applauding the feds and patting Gerry Ritz on the back every step of the way. To the Minister of Agriculture: is he still cutting the feds slack on their performance or is he finally willing to stand up and demand better for Saskatchewan producers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for her question. Mr. Speaker, I understand the bill has gone back to committee. It was a procedural issue that held it up for a couple of days in Ottawa, but I believe it is back on track.

Mr. Speaker, I described the federal response to our requests for strong legislation as deficient. I don't think Minister Ritz felt that I was applauding him in that instance.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, this grain transportation crisis has cost Prairie farmers \$8 billion in lost income. Roughly 30 million tonnes of grain was left in elevators, bins, and in farmers' fields throughout the winter and it's only now slowly moving to market. It's outrageous that the federal government can't even figure out basic parliamentary procedure in order to pass legislation that will finally allow compensation for producers when the big rail companies slack off.

To the minister: in the wake of this latest goof-up when it comes to something this serious, what exactly has he communicated to the federal government?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, this legislation is certainly better than what we had before, but we asked for different things. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, we asked for substantially higher requirements for car deliveries. We asked for substantially higher penalties for non-compliance to the railways and/or the grain companies, Mr. Speaker, or shippers if they were found to be lagging. We asked for specific requirements to be put in the bill to require all corridors and all customers receive service. Mr. Speaker, we didn't get all of those things. The federal government has gone partway and now we do see that grain is moving again.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, that this government initially supported the federal Conservatives last March on their no-penalty stance and earlier this year on their initial weak \$100,000 penalties. Only after we questioned did they demand \$250,000 penalties which were ignored once again by the federal Tories. They didn't even put forward those penalties in their latest botched amendments to their own bill last week, a month after the Ag minister sent them his letter.

Mr. Speaker, it's so clear this government has no influence on the feds even though come election time they're out there pounding in signs for them. When will this minister put aside his own partisan support of the federal Conservatives and properly represent the producers of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the question is, when will the Leader of the Opposition stand up for agriculture in a spring where the most significant economic matter facing the province of Saskatchewan is grain transportation? He started . . . Oh now we've got the member for Lakeview pointing. The Leader of the Opposition started today's question period with a good set of questions, an important set of questions about what we've done with respect to the federal government on a First Nations matter. He has stood up and said, we've written to the federal government on certain issues in the past. Mr. Speaker, as far as we know, he has not even written a letter. He has not placed a single call to the federal Minister of Agriculture on the most important economic issue facing the province of Saskatchewan. The critic's doing her work, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of agriculture, asking the questions. Why is the Leader of the Opposition missing in action, Mr. Speaker?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure.

Funding for Regina Bypass Project

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

Speaker, as you know, Saskatchewan is growing at a record rate. This growth makes our communities more prosperous and dynamic. It allows us to invest in better education, health care, and social programming. But this growth also brings challenges. Traffic safety and congestion are two of these challenges. It's more than just an inconvenience. It's a serious, significant, safety issue. The communities along Highway No. 1 east of Regina continue to grow. We have heard the concerns of residents in this area. There are new schools, businesses, and homes. We understand how important it is that we improve safety and traffic flow.

Through the Saskatchewan growth plan, we want to put the infrastructure in place that will meet the needs of these communities for the long term. The Regina bypass project addresses these objectives. It will reduce truck traffic volumes on both Victoria Avenue East, and Dewdney Avenue. It improves the overall efficiency of the transportation system, making the Global Transportation Hub a more attractive place to invest.

Recently we announced the finalization of the route for the bypass. Today we announce another important milestone. A contribution of up to \$200 million will be provided through the P3 Canada Fund for the construction of the Regina bypass. The province of Saskatchewan will fund the remainder of the project's cost at a level which will be determined through a competitive P3 [public-private partnership] procurement process. By using a P3 model, the Regina bypass is expected to be open to traffic years earlier than under a traditional delivery model, with priority components opening in advance of the full bypass completion.

It is important that this infrastructure gets built sooner rather than a decade into the future. This project will be the most extensive transportation project undertaken in this province's history. A significant amount of planning work for this project has been done; however there is still much planning and pre-construction work required. But today's commitment by the federal government marks another important step towards making this project a reality. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you know, Saskatchewan's growing at a record rate, and this growth makes our communities more prosperous. It makes it more dynamic. It allows us to invest in better education, health care, and social standing, and programming as well, Mr. Speaker.

But this growth also brings challenges. We are hearing that traffic safety and congestion are two key challenges attached to this bypass, and it's more than just an inconvenience. It is a serious and significant safety issue. And a lot of the communities along Highway 1 East have continued to grow, and they are continuing to express their concerns of the residents of this area.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's right. There are new schools, businesses, and homes that are coming up. We understand how important it is that we improve safety and traffic loads. The Regina bypass project addresses this objective and, Mr. Speaker, as it will reduce truck traffic, as the minister's

indicated, to Victoria Avenue East and Dewdney Avenue.

Mr. Speaker, there's no question that the opposition looked at this particular contribution of \$200 million will be provided to the P3 Canada Fund for the construction of this bypass which is vital to our growing population and our growing economy. Mr. Speaker, today's federal commitment marks another important step in the right direction towards making this project a real thing for Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In order to facilitate the work of committee this afternoon and this evening, I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This House stands adjourned to 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 14:27.]

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