



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

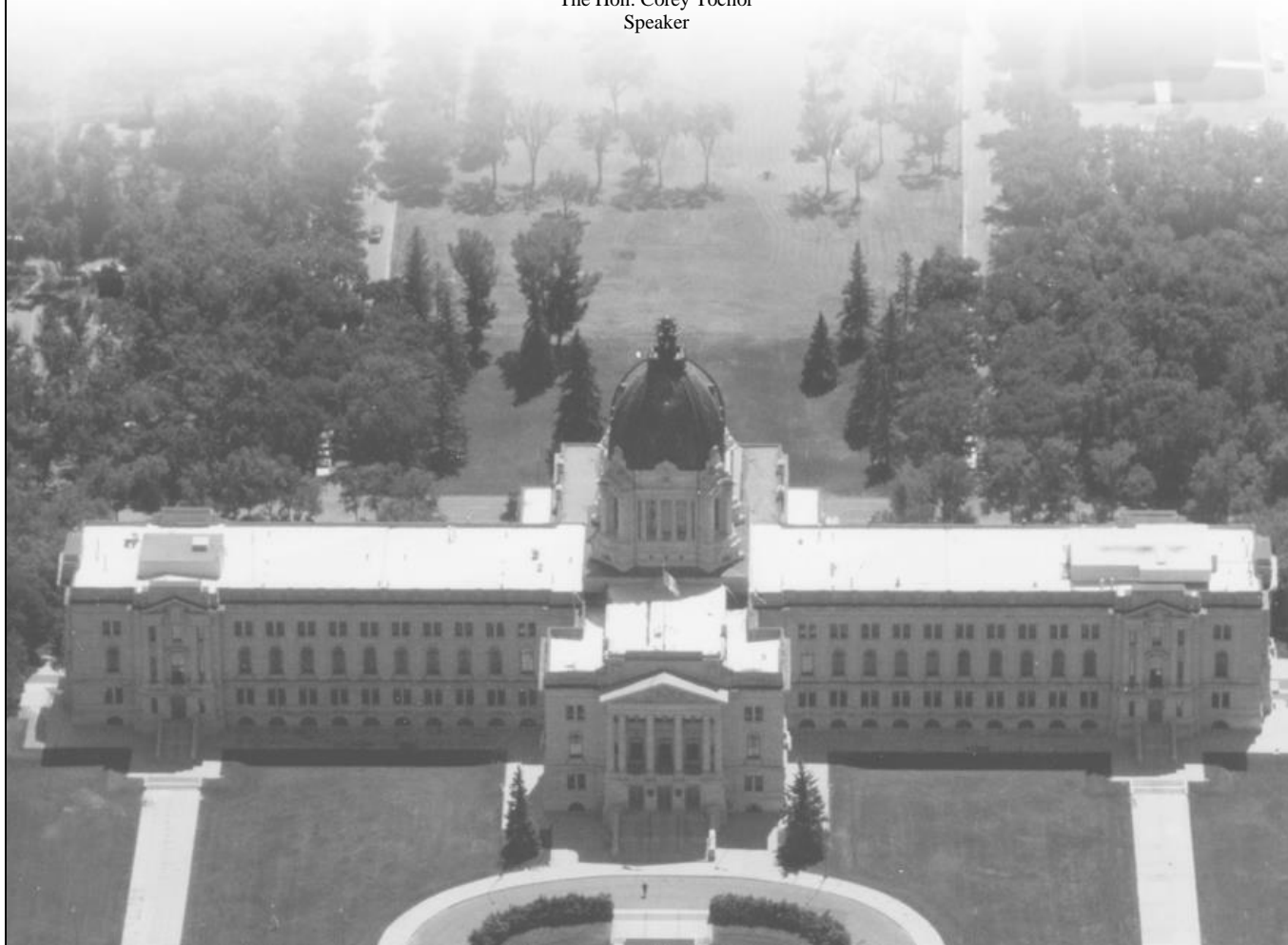
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Corey Tochor
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
1st Session — 28th Legislature

Speaker — Hon. Corey Tochor

Premier — Hon. Brad Wall

Leader of the Opposition — Trent Wotherspoon

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Marit, Hon. David — Wood River (SP)

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Wilson, Hon. Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)

Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)

Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)

Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 50; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 11

Clerks-at-the-Table

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I'd request leave of the House for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and colleagues, for the leave. You know, Mr. Speaker, if we're fortunate in our vocation, we will find that whatever career we choose might give us occasion to make lifelong friends. And, Mr. Speaker, I think all would agree that that's very much the case in politics. It's one of the advantages of being involved in politics.

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of introducing to you and through you a lifelong friend, a very good friend of mine from my home community of Swift Current. And he's joined by his family, Mr. Speaker. I have a few things to say about him, but I'll make the introduction now, if I may.

We have in your gallery today from Swift Current, Bryon Campbell. Maybe Bryon could give us a wave. He's joined by his daughters, Sue Stenson, and Patricia Patton is here as well — Sue and Pat — and two of his grandkids, Blaine and Kelli, Sue's son and daughter, also son and daughter of the late Rob. I graduated with Rob Stenson in Swift Current who himself was quite a business leader here right through Western Canada, and his efforts are responsible for a lot of new jobs created in our province and in Manitoba. And Blaine and Kelli are here as well.

Mr. Speaker, I got to know Bryon Campbell after first returning to Swift Current, having been away for some time. He had known my dad, knows my dad well. He was a senior leader in the Royal Bank here in this province. He was a regional manager for the Royal Bank of Canada in Saskatchewan, and he had come to know Dad, I think both in terms of their business arrangement, but I think also Dad and my Uncle Frank might have moved him and certainly moved his colleagues once or twice around the province.

And so I got to know Bryon a little bit through that and through politics. I want to share with members of the House that Bryon Campbell was my very first campaign manager when I decided to run for the nomination of the Saskatchewan Party. He was a source of encouragement and counsel and then became my campaign manager for the '99 campaign, where the party was only two years old. And so we didn't perhaps have the sophisticated approach to campaigning that we do now.

I could tell you, though, his history was in banking. His instruction to the candidate was not to keep banking hours. If I made the mistake of sitting in that campaign headquarters for longer than two or three minutes, he would remind me that there were no undecided voters in the campaign headquarters and to get out and start door knocking.

He did that in '99, led a successful campaign in those nascent years of our party in Swift Current and across the province, and then again in '03 provided campaign leadership, and then again in '07, Mr. Speaker. And he has been just a great source of counsel and support and friendship.

Mr. Speaker, I can also share with members of the House that he's been a leader within our home community. He served on the city council in Swift Current. He was one of the original 13 business leaders in Swift Current that ensured the Swift Current Broncos could return to Swift Current from Lethbridge.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am just honoured to have been able to make his friendship and to count him as one of my very, very best friends. I am grateful for his advice and for his encouragement. Mr. Speaker, may I say I think our party in general is grateful for his leadership which went beyond the constituency of Swift Current. And to the extent there is a Saskatchewan Party today, well Bryon Campbell played a very, very important role.

So in the company and the presence of his family, it is a great honour for me to say for the public record how grateful I am to him personally, to thank him personally, to welcome him and his family here today. And I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming Bryon and his family to the Legislative Assembly today.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to follow up briefly with the Premier here, in the introduction to Bryon Campbell, I welcome him to his Assembly. Obviously he's worked hard to support the Premier and that party, and it's people like these that actually do strengthen the democratic process. And it's these kind of people that all of us have in our own lives and in our political lives that allow us to serve the people of Saskatchewan.

By the thorough introduction, I suspect he . . . You know, we're really trying to encourage candidates for the next team. I suspect that Mr. Bryon Campbell won't be on our team in the next round, Mr. Speaker. But I do want to say to him, in his efforts within the democratic process in the province of Saskatchewan, thank you for your involvement.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're joined in the gallery by a number of people that are here today for the reporting out of committee of Bill 63. We'd like to introduce some of the people that have travelled from across the province today for their support of our education system. And these are people that are representatives of our associate and partner schools as well as the Catholic school division.

We're joined, Mr. Speaker, by Richard Williams, superintendent, Seventh-day Adventist Christian School; by Andrew Savenye, principal, Seventh-day Adventist Christian School in Regina; Karen Landry, principal of Rosthern Christian School; Donna Ziegler, Chair of Regina Catholic School Board; and Vicky Bonnell, also from Regina Catholic; Bryan Hillis, Luther College; Rob Palmarin, Athol Murray College of Notre Dame; Wayne Hove, Lutheran Collegiate Bible Institute; Todd Harrison, principal of Harvest City Christian Academy; Dave Wells, pastor of Harvest City Church; Rod Rilling, principal of Regina Christian; Nina Brailean, Regina Christian; Rod Donison from the leadership impact program, a program dealing with at-risk youth; Curtis Kleisinger, executive director, Mother Theresa Middle School; Friar John Meehan, president of Champion College.

Mr. Speaker, those people are here in support of the variety and diversity that we look to protect and promote in Bill 63.

We're also joined today, Mr. Speaker, by Jaimie Smith-Windsor, who is on the executive of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

I would ask the members to welcome all of these people to their Assembly today.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join with the minister opposite in welcoming these incredibly valued partners in our publicly funded education system, leaders within education, leaders in our community, to the Assembly here today, Mr. Speaker.

These are people, many of them — I don't know all of them real well but I know some of them quite well — and these are individuals and people and schools that enrich the lives of so many across Saskatchewan. They work to extend opportunity, to extend hope, to ensure challenge and care to so many. And to those that are here today, I thank you for your presence, but I also extend back to your teams and your staff and your boards and your respective organization a heartfelt thanks from a grateful opposition.

It's really a pleasure to have leadership from the Catholic schools here today in Vicky Bonnell and in Donna Ziegler, and other representation here as well. Of course we meet regularly, value the work. We had the chance to sit down earlier this week again and certainly that's of great value.

It's a pleasure to have leadership of Luther here today, Mr. Speaker, President Hillis that's here today. And you know, I think some members on the floor have a relationship. I think the Minister of Agriculture once . . . I think he attended with my father-in-law, at one point, over at Luther, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, whether it's Principal Mark Anderson or whether it's people like legendary Ange Tillier, Mr. Speaker, over at Luther, that's been inspirational to so many and a foundation in sport, Mr. Speaker, or friends of mine like Gerry Harris or Drew Hunter — just so many that make that program strong.

And I have some familiarity with Luther because of course it used to be within my riding, Mr. Speaker, but moreover— I went to Thom Collegiate, a little further north — but my wife was a student at Luther High School, the student president at Luther, organizer of the LIT [Luther Invitational Tournament], a world-renowned or a North American-renowned basketball tournament as well, Mr. Speaker. So I thank them for being here.

And I see Father Meehan here of Champion College. This is somebody who embodies service to our community. I guess what I'd like to do is ask for extended leave so I can continue just because these are folks that deserve their due.

So Father Meehan, somebody who serves our community in exceptional ways. And somebody, Mr. Speaker, who I see in a selfless way interact with our community, really putting his faith into action, Mr. Speaker, and somebody that I know that's deeply committed to reconciliation as well, Mr. Speaker.

I see we have folks here from Notre Dame as well. I mean this is in many ways . . . For many when they think of Saskatchewan, they may think of Notre Dame through the historic efforts as a development for players and teams — and Rod Brind'Amour, through Wendel Clark and Curtis Joseph. Mr. Speaker, it's really quite the place.

And I see Curtis Kleisinger up there and leadership of Mother Teresa Middle School, an inspirational group of teachers in community that wraps supports and care around children, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to identify them.

You know, I know Harvest City's here, Regina Christian School. I suspect I'm missing a few here right now, but I value their relationship.

And I guess, Mr. Speaker, as I . . . I find the heckling by the Premier of Saskatchewan during an introduction of these leaders in their community to be maybe the tackiest thing I've ever seen on the floor of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. And I want to say this, Mr. Speaker . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — It has been a long week. It is Thursday. I would ask all members . . . Order. Let us show . . . Let us hear the finishing remarks from the Leader of the Opposition on his introductions, and we're going to carry on. Today we'll have a much better decorum in this Assembly than in the past. I respectfully ask the Leader of the Opposition to wrap up his introductions and not to make them partisan. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of a grateful opposition, I'm so thankful to welcome these leaders to their Assembly in the face of a very challenging court decision.

It's important and incumbent that we work together. We support students and stability. We support these schools, and we must appeal, Mr. Speaker. So it's a time where we need to stand together. And we don't need tacky political games, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina University.

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to join with the minister and the member opposite in welcoming some of these fine individuals to their Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker. I have many of them as constituents of mine, Mr. Speaker, and so I'd like to just . . . if they could give a wave to us as I introduce their names.

A good friend to many of us here from LeaderImpact, Rod Donison, who's been a very good friend to me; as well Dr. John Meehan, the president of Campion College. If you would give a wave, sir. I can't quite see around the thing. I'm an alumnus of Campion College; I also had the fortune of teaching at Campion College. And so they are important constituents of mine, as is Bryan Hillis from Luther College, Mr. Speaker, also a former colleague.

I would also like to introduce Nina Brailean from the Regina Christian School, which is also in my constituency. Mr. Speaker, Rod Rilling is here with her. I would also like him to have a wave. And I believe accompanying them — I can't quite see him — is Ian Hanna, a friend to many of us here who is seated up in the gallery as well. Would you join me in welcoming all these fine individuals to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

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

Ms. Beck: — I request leave for extended introduction.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I do concur that what is needed here is some calmness and some respect. And I want to join the members, all members in welcoming many guests to our gallery today.

[10:15]

Of course these are issues that we're discussing about our kids, and there is a lot of care and emotion. And that is understandable. And I want to commend each of you for being here to express your views and your support for publicly funded education in this province. It is very important and it's the reason that I stand here.

I want to single out some guests in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, that I do know and have a relationship with. Jaimie Smith-Windsor, who is a member of the board of Sask Rivers

Public School Division, who makes her home in Waskesiu. We started I think as trustees in the same group, and you stood out right away as someone who was passionate and articulate and was there for the right reasons. And I want to welcome you to your Assembly.

A couple of other people up there I see, I see Donna Ziegler and Vicky Bonnell, and people that I had the real privilege to sit around many tables, joint tables with the Regina Public School Board and the Catholic School Board, and found many points, so many points of common interest. And I want to welcome you to your Assembly.

I want to single out all of the folks from Luther, but particularly Dr. Bryan Hillis, who I think he remembers was a professor of mine when I was a student at Luther College. And at the risk of seeming like I am sucking up, it really was one of the best classes I ever took. I had an opportunity . . . It was a intersectional class around the intersections of sociology and philosophy and religion, and it really was a special class. I want to welcome you to your Assembly.

The folks from Notre Dame. I'll throw this in — my dad had the opportunity to play hockey for Père Murray at one point, and that is something that he will talk about at length. I come from Lang, not too far down the road from Notre Dame, and it is a place that holds a special place in the history of this province, and certainly the hockey history of this province. Mr. Speaker, I really do think it is important.

I see Curtis from Mother Teresa Middle School. When I was the assistant director at Regina Transition House, we entered into partnership with that school and just had a delightful time there with the very special and dedicated students and staff there. And I want to welcome him to his Assembly as well, Mr. Speaker.

And of course the Harvest City Christian school and the Regina Christian School, associate schools within the public school system. And you know, I had an opportunity to meet with many of their students at the annual student and trustee meeting.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm getting heckled from the other side. And it's not my intent to do anything other than welcome each of you and understand that your passion and your dedication to students who you represent is to be commended. Thank you. Welcome, and I invite all members to welcome you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Docherty: — Well thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to take a little less time than a few others here in the introductions. But Coronation Park, the constituency of Coronation Park is well represented today and, Mr. Speaker, we've got one of the most diverse populations and school divisions in all the province. And I'd like to take an opportunity here to welcome a few folks. Dave Wells, pastor from Harvest City, can you give us a wave? Dave, welcome, and Todd Harrison, the principal from Harvest City. You do some marvellous work, and thanks again for everything you do on behalf of the constituency and the students at Harvest City.

I'd also like to take a second here to single out Curtis Kleisinger, executive director of Mother Teresa Middle School. I've had an opportunity to be in Mother Teresa on many, many occasions. And there was one occasion when the member for Gardiner Park and I tried to win a cake-building contest. And we didn't win, but for the love of God, we tried.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of again all members here, Mother Teresa has done an exemplary job in teaching and mentoring vulnerable students. I just want to ensure that they understand the tremendous job that you do and you need to be recognized for that. So, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members and especially Coronation Park, thank you for everything you've done in regards to teaching our youth. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, I don't want to certainly . . . If I could ask for leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to join with those welcoming the partners throughout the education system that are here today. But I particularly want to say a special word of welcome and thanks to a former professor of mine, a former teacher of mine, and I'm talking about Dr. Bryan Hillis of course. And certainly he did his best with me, Mr. Speaker, and we're certainly appreciative of those efforts.

I also want to say, as a Champion grad, I want to say to Father John Meehan, really good to see you here at your Legislative Assembly. And again those that would say Father John Meehan's a real force for not just education but reconciliation in this province, they've got that exactly right. And it's always good to see, you know, it's always . . . Is it Father Dr. John or Dr. Father John? But anyway, good to see him here at his Legislative Assembly.

And I also want to say, to Vicky Bonnell and Donna Ziegler from the Regina Catholic School Board, a special word of welcome. And it's too bad that you weren't here the other day when the member from Coronation Park was congratulating himself and his government for the new building at Sacred Heart Community School. It would have been great to see how that went over. Because of course these are two individuals that we owe that school and the great work being done for those students, we owe them so much, Mr. Speaker. So on behalf of the community of North Central in Regina Elphinstone-Centre, I want to say thank you so much for all that you did, particularly as regards Sacred Heart Community School.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming these very important people to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Environment.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Quickly and respectfully, to all members of this House, I'd like to welcome a couple of individuals. First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, from the great community of Rosthern, Saskatchewan, is Karen Landry. She's also the principal of the Rosthern Christian School in that community, Mr. Speaker, and down to observe the proceedings in the House here today.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also would like to make mention of a board trustee of the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, Jaimie Smith-Windsor, who I've had the opportunity, along with other MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] from the region, to have numerous meetings over the last number of years on important issues to that school division, as many of those schools are also in the constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in welcoming these individuals to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to make a couple of introductions. You know, last night we were in committee about Bill 63 and people stayed late into the evening. There are a couple people who are back here this morning, very concerned about the passage of Bill 63.

And first I want to recognize Jackie Christianson over in the west gallery. Jackie is with CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees], the educational assistants who make our schools the schools that do the great work that they do. And also Tria Donaldson, also in the east gallery, of CUPE, again was here late into the evening watching the proceedings and the . . . the proceedings. And I'll leave that at that.

Also in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, are four very special guests who are very concerned about the privatization processes of this government now that it's becoming more and more clear, are some folks with the Saskatchewan Transportation Company that are very concerned of the impact this has on the people of Saskatchewan throughout this province and how it seems this government has forgotten its way. These four members of the Amalgamated Transit Union are here to watch the proceedings, and they are Eric Carr, Clem Balanoff, Elana Kessler, and Ken Youngmans. I would ask all members to join all of these people to their legislature. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I'll join with colleagues from both sides of the House to welcome members of the education sector here, particularly Dr. Hillis who I've been able to get to know very well.

I've been able to bring greetings to LIT for five years in a row, to open up their wonderful, longest-standing basketball tournament across Canada, I believe. And it's a wonderful experience to see all the students take part in LIT. And it's just a great event and shows the spirit of that school and it's a wonderful . . . And hopefully I can go for five more years, Dr. Hillis.

And a good friend of mine from Mother Teresa School, Curtis Kleisinger, we played hockey together years and years ago. And Klinger was always a little bit faster than me, but I protected him on occasion. So it's good to see you. Welcome to your Legislative Assembly. And the work that you do at Mother Teresa School, I've been able to visit there a couple times and it's fantastic.

And, Vicky and Donna, welcome to your Legislative Assembly. And, Vicky, I wish you were here when the member from Elphinstone voted against building a school in his constituency. That would have been something to see as well. So I wish all members would welcome these educators to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce, has been introduced already, but Rob Palmarin from Athol Murray College in Notre Dame.

As many of us are doing on this side of the House, we're introducing members that represent schools that are sitting in our constituency. As I jumped up to introduce Rob from Notre Dame, I realized it's not in my constituency anymore. After five years and now redistribution, it's in the member from Lumsden-Morse's constituency. Sorry about that.

I won't go on to stories of my dealings with Notre Dame, coming from Milestone in that area, and playing a lot of sports, because none of them ended very well. So I'd just like to welcome him here.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Provincial Secretary.

Hon. Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce and welcome a constituent of mine who lives up in the beautiful national park, Prince Albert National Park. And, Jaimie Smith-Windsor, please be welcomed to the Assembly. We appreciate your service for all that you've done for Saskatchewan citizens. Thank you very much. Please welcome Jaimie to her Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, today marks 387 days since Mekayla Bali went missing from Yorkton, my hometown. It's Missing Persons Week, and to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, it's my honour to introduce her family seated on the floor of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker: Mekayla's mother, Paula — can you give us a wave, Paula? — her siblings Joshua and Eliyora, grandma Margaret, and aunt Rhonda. Today you can notice they're all wearing the same colour. It's teal. It's Mekayla's favourite colour, and they wear that whenever they talk about their missing loved one. And joining the family today is a good friend of mine, Leonard Keshane. He is from Parkland Victims Services, as well as the former chief of Keeseekoose First Nation.

Mr. Speaker, Mekayla's disappearance is a sobering reminder that this could happen to anyone. Our hearts are with the Bali family, Mr. Speaker, and those in Saskatchewan with missing

loved ones. We met earlier this morning with the government caucus and the family, and I will meet a little bit later with the Minister of Justice, talk about their story. I'd ask that both sides of the House join me in praying for Mekayla's safe return, Mr. Speaker, and encourage the public to be informed about Mekayla's very public disappearance and the family's very public search, and help bring Mekayla home, Mr. Speaker. I ask all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I just want to say a word of welcome to the Bali family. And certainly . . . It was little less than a year ago that I had the privilege of being out on the streets of Regina, walking with the Bali family and spreading the word about Mekayla.

And it's hard to see you here today, because of course that time has gone on, and I can only imagine the toll that that takes. But if there's some encouragement to be drawn from this, know that Mekayla is not forgotten and that that search will go on. And may your prayers be answered some day, and very soon. But on behalf of the official opposition, I just want to say a word of welcome and encouragement that Mekayla is not forgotten.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of the House, I'd like to introduce 38 students from École St. Margaret in Moose Jaw, our fair city. They're from grade 4 and grade 7. And they're accompanied by their teacher . . . there's actually three of them, so they must be quite a group, but grade 4 and 7. We have Madame Jamie Forrest — just give us a wave. Monsieur Clayton Boyer. And if I screw up the pronunciation, pardon me. Monsieur Jean-Yves Savoie. Thank you, and welcome them to their Legislative Building.

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning we had introductions of a number of worthy guests involved in the education field, but I think the reason that education is such a hot topic and a passionate topic is because of the students sitting in our gallery today. There's another school group, a small school group from the great community of Ituna. Members might remember that Ituna was a finalist in the Kraft Hockeyville competition.

[10:30]

And so I'd like to introduce nine grade 8 students who are accompanied by their teacher, Cindy Yanko. They're sitting in the second row on the west gallery, along with Angie Polegi as one of the chaperones, and Wesley Kanciruk, the bus driver. And I apologize if I perhaps mispronounced that last name. I'll be meeting with them later, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure they'll have lots of questions for me. And so I'd ask all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to join my colleague from Moose Jaw Wakamow in welcoming the students from St. Margaret's. Many of the students from St. Margaret's also live in Moose Jaw North. And my grandson attended that school for five years, and I know the good work that they do in St. Margaret's. So I want to extend a welcome to them as well. So welcome, and thank you.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again to present a petition opposing the Sask Party's cuts to spiritual care. Mr. Speaker, it was interesting, just a few days ago in committee we had an opportunity to talk about spiritual care, and the minister told me there was some inequity in service: not every health region had spiritual care, this important service. So instead of expanding it, Mr. Speaker, they've chosen to cut it, Mr. Speaker.

The petitioners point out that in this last budget, the Sask Party has eliminated funding for spiritual care services within our health facilities. They point out that we will be the only province within Canada to not fund this support for patients, residents, and their families seeking wellness. The petitioners point out that the Sask Party hid their plan to scrap funding from spiritual care in health region facilities in the last election, which was just over a year ago, Mr. Speaker.

They point out that spiritual care responds to the spiritual and emotional needs of patients and residents and provides a compassionate listening presence in times of crisis. And they point out that spiritual care supports families, patients, and residents in making difficult decisions, and lastly that spiritual care can provide support for all families, patients, and residents in obtaining comfort and support, regardless of faith or belief, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan immediately reinstate the funding for spiritual care services in this province's health region facilities.

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

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

We're all very concerned that the federal-imposed carbon tax would have severe negative consequences to the Saskatchewan economy. And furthermore, a federal-imposed carbon tax does absolutely nothing to reduce carbon; it's simply an unfair tax grab. I'd like to read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed from citizens from Briercrest, from Caron, from Goodeve, from Moose Jaw, from Bienfait, and Regina. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand in my place today to answer the call from the member from Prince Albert Northcote for anyone in the Assembly, anyone to stand up and help fight for the city of Prince Albert, the city of bridge, where the community and the region of the northern part of the province are asking for a second bridge for Prince Albert. I'm very proud to stand in my place to answer that call to support the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

And the need for a second bridge for Prince Albert has never been clearer than it is today. Prince Albert and all the communities north of Prince Albert and all the businesses of Prince Albert and north that send people and products through Prince Albert require a solution and leadership. So the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker. They ask:

That the Sask Party government stop stalling and hiding behind rhetoric, and refusing to listen to the people of Saskatchewan calling for action, and begin immediately to plan and then quickly commence the construction of a second bridge for Prince Albert using federal and provincial dollars.

And as we do day after day, week after week, and month after month, and now year after year, Mr. Speaker, we are presenting this petition. And the people that have signed this petition are from all throughout Saskatchewan. And on this particular page, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this page are primarily from Prince Albert, and I do so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition to ensure job security for victims of domestic violence. The people who have signed this petition want to bring to our attention the following: Saskatchewan has the highest rate of domestic violence by intimate partners amongst all Canadian provinces. Citizens of Saskatchewan are concerned about the lack of support for victims of domestic abuse, and one in three Canadian workers have been impacted by domestic violence, and for many, the violence follows them to work. Financial stability and a supportive work environment are vital for any victim of domestic abuse, and victims of domestic abuse should not be further victimized at work. Employers lose \$77.9 million annually due to the direct and indirect impacts of domestic violence.

Employers are responsible for providing safe workplaces. Manitoba has already enacted such legislation. Ontario is on its

way to enacting legislation. We've introduced a private member's bill to do similar work here, Mr. Speaker, and these bills ensure that job security is provided for victims of domestic violence.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan enact legislation that requires all employers to provide a minimum of five paid workdays and a minimum of 17 weeks of unpaid work leave with the assurance of job security upon their return for all victims of domestic abuse in Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the individuals who have signed this petition today are from the communities of Swift Current and Cadillac. I so submit.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition again on pay equity. And the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan want to bring to our attention the following: that the citizens of this province believe in an economy powered by transparency, accountability, security, and equity, and that all women should be paid equitably; that women are powerful drivers of economic growth, and their economic empowerment benefits us all.

We know that the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that in Saskatoon in 2016, women earned on average 63 cents for every dollar that a man makes, and in Regina women earned on average 73 cents for every dollar a man makes. According to the most recent StatsCan data, the national gender wage gap for full-time workers is 72 cents for every dollar a man makes.

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

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan eliminate the wage gap between women and men across all sectors where the Government of Saskatchewan has jurisdiction, provide a framework under which this can be done within this term of the Assembly, and that the Saskatchewan government call upon workplaces within Saskatchewan within the private sector to eliminate the wage gap between women and men.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition today come from Pleasantdale, Chaplin, and Saskatoon. I do so present. Thank you.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to stand and present a petition to increase the funding to Prince Albert mobile crisis. Due to a cut in funding, Prince Albert mobile crisis unit has had to close its door during daytime hours, resulting in a loss of resource to people in distress. And since

it's Mental Health Week, I feel it's important to identify the role that these crisis workers play with addressing mental health issues in the community.

Mr. Speaker, the crisis workers are trained to identify individuals struggling with mental health issues, and they're aware of the services available for individuals needing mental health services. And studies show that if individuals get services as soon as they need them, the services they need later on is minimal, and it's a cost-saving measure to ensure that we have the crisis services available immediately.

But one of the important things, Mr. Speaker, is that these crisis intervention workers are trained to use the suicide risk assessment so they can evaluate the level of risk of suicide for clients, and they know exactly what kind of services they need due to the level of risk that they present at. And so it's really crucial that we have crisis intervention services available 24 hours, 7 days a week in our third-largest city, which is Prince Albert.

The daytime closure of Prince Albert mobile crisis has put stress on Prince Albert Police Service, the Victoria Hospital staff, and other agencies who are not trained or qualified to provide this counselling and intervention services to clients. I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Saskatchewan Party government to increase funding to Prince Albert mobile crisis unit so they may once again offer 24-hour emergency crisis service.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing this particular petition come from the community of Prince Albert and actually come from Prince Albert Carlton constituency. And they're hoping that their member is paying attention today. I do so present.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of scrapping Bill 63. Those who've signed this petition want to draw our attention to the following, and unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this may be their last chance to have their voices heard.

They want us to know that they are opposed to changing *The Education Act* with Bill 63 as it currently reads until the government takes part in active, good faith, transparent conversations with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. They want transparency and agreement upon all, if any, changes to *The Education Act*. They want us to know that it's imperative that the government recognizes that there must be an appropriate time frame in which elected boards are able to convey all information of decisions that will affect their communities. They want us to know that they wish the government would recognize that local school boards are the voice of Saskatchewan communities and that decisions should remain with such elected boards.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan repeal Bill 63 and preserve governance of elected school boards.

Mr. Speaker, these signatures again, as well as the emails, have been rolling in from around the province. The particular pages that I am presenting today are from Yellow Grass, Weyburn, Fillmore, Indian Head, Fort Qu'Appelle, Edgeley, Halbrite, Lang, McLean, Wolseley, Balgonie, Cowessess, Midale, Estevan, and McTaggart.

Mr. Speaker, these are people who . . . I recognize many of these names. They are not necessarily our supporters, but they are supporters of publicly funded education, and they want this bill scrapped. I do so present.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition calling on the government to restore funding to post-secondary institutions. In recent years, Mr. Speaker, we've seen a precipitous drop in the number of students from lower income families accessing post-secondary education. And we've seen a significant rise in the costs of education, with Saskatchewan students paying among the highest rates of tuition in the country.

In this budget, Mr. Speaker, we saw once again this government choosing to cut post-secondary education, with a 5.6 per cent cut to universities and colleges, a cut that's already resulted in job losses at Sask Polytechnic, that is likely to result in more job and program losses and increases in costs for students. Alongside this we've seen a decrease in student aid and the elimination of the tax credit for students on tuition and books, Mr. Speaker. As a result, education is becoming less affordable and less accessible.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately restore funding to Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions and stop the damaging cuts to our students.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing the petition today are from Saskatoon. I do so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition. The people who have signed this petition are opposed to the Sask Party's plan to scrap and the sell-off of the Saskatchewan Transportation Company. They would like us all to know that STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] provides a vital service to many seniors, workers, and their families throughout the province, and that by scrapping STC out of the blue and without asking permission of the owners, the Saskatchewan people, the Sask Party is sending a clear sign about how little they care about protecting our Crowns like SaskTel; and that STC helps drive the economy with a parcel service that serves farms and other businesses. Mr. Speaker, I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately stop the plan to scrap and sell off Saskatchewan Transportation Company, and to resume transportation services to the people of Saskatchewan.

It is supported by many leaders and it is signed by thousands and thousands of Saskatchewan residents. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Mosaic K3 Mine Grand Opening

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you. Yesterday, I and the Speaker had the honour of attending a major event in my constituency and the Speaker's hometown, the grand opening of the Mosaic Esterhazy K3 mine. This milestone is historic for Mosaic and for the province as K3 is the first production shaft to be sunk in this province in almost 50 years.

Mosaic has invested \$3.2 billion to increase the capacity of the mine to 21 million tonnes per year when it's completed by 2024. The new expansion is expected to extend the life of this mine by another 50 years.

Mr. Speaker, this mine was already the largest underground potash mine in the world, and with this expansion it will continue to be for decades to come. This mine also has the distinction of having the tallest structure between Winnipeg and Calgary, with massive facilities that are almost beyond your imagination.

This investment is a major employer in the region and a huge economic driver in the province. The continued expansion, even in the midst of commodity price uncertainty, speaks to the resiliency and strength of the Saskatchewan economy.

Our government has been working tirelessly to make sure that Saskatchewan is a great place to live, work, and invest, and this mine expansion is further proof that the policies of this government are working. That is why there is no surprise when the Fraser Institute named Saskatchewan the most attractive place in the world for mining investment.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Mosaic, their employees, and the local community on the grand opening of the expansion at the K3 mine in Esterhazy.

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

Wastewater Project at Co-op Refinery Complex Wins Global Water Award

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the innovative work of a great Saskatchewan company. Recently the wastewater improvement project at the Co-op Refinery Complex was named industrial project of the year at the annual Global Water Awards held in Madrid, Spain on April 24th, 2017. The award recognizes the project commissioned in 2016 as the most impressive technical or environmental

achievement in the field of industrial water.

Mr. Speaker, several years ago the refinery expanded its operations to produce 30,000 more barrels of oil per day, taking it from 100,000 barrels to 130,000 barrels per day, which of course increased its water usage.

The refinery's water source was a blend of wells and city water, and of course water is a precious resource. And this wastewater improvement project allows the refinery to be efficient and sustainable, actually recovering every drop of water, recycling 100 per cent of the wastewater — 2 million gallons daily, Mr. Speaker.

With GE's [General Electric] technology, in this project all the wastewater is recovered in a socially responsible and environmentally sound way that conserves water for Regina and the entire province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join with me in recognizing Federated Co-op and the Co-op Refinery Complex's leadership and investment in this meaningful, world-leading project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

Yorkton Minor Football Hosts Football Night in Saskatchewan

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was great to take part in the 11th annual Cornerstone Credit Union Yorkton Football Night in Saskatchewan. It was a star-studded event, raising money to make sure that the ability to pay does not keep young people from playing football. The hall was filled with guests who made sure the event was successful. And the many local sponsors made sure the minor football club will be well supported for another year.

Mr. Speaker, like every other year, there was a solid group of speakers. That included Hall of Famer Dan Farthing, who opened the event, and Grey Cup-winning coach Paul LaPolice was the keynote speaker. All the speakers did very well, but Mr. Speaker, LaPolice really stood out, speaking about how leadership should be humble and selfless, and how to treat others. It was a powerful message.

Mr. Speaker, like many communities across the province, there are hard-working people who make events like this happen, dedicating countless hours into organizing, coordinating, and making sure that the event goes off without a hitch, and I would like to acknowledge some of these. These people are Barry Sharpe, former teacher of the Yorkton Regional High School; Darcy Zaharia; Sheri Trapp, formerly of the Roughriders; Roby Sharpe, teacher of the Yorkton Regional High School; and Jason Farrell, among many others.

This annual football night also has close connections to my colleague, the member from Gardiner Park, who got honourable mentions time and time again throughout the evening, as he spoke at the first event as well as the event last year.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Yorkton Minor Football on another successful football night

and thank everyone who helped make it happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Students Mobilizing Against Cuts

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Students Mobilizing Against Cuts, or SMAC, is a group of university students that has organized an impressive five-day series of positive and creative actions in opposition to this government's cuts to advanced education and cuts to vital services that support our post-secondary students.

Mr. Speaker, our province's post-secondary students have been hit particularly hard by this budget. From cuts to funding to the elimination of tax deductions on textbooks and tuition fees, the Sask Party government is making over-burdened students pay even more.

Mr. Speaker, there've been no shortage of protests against the Sask Party cuts, both here on the steps of the legislature and in every corner of the province. Saskatchewan people want change, and it's very clear why. From education to health care to jobs, the Sask Party government's cuts are hurting Saskatchewan people. Earlier this week, we saw a member opposite rise with what appeared to be absolute glee at the opportunity to criticize these protests with no insight into the way this government's actions have left people hurt and angry.

Mr. Speaker, thousands of people from across our province have united against these heartless cuts. Instead of pointing fingers, this government should take the opportunity to listen to the valuable messages people are desperately trying to bring to their attention. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me today in recognizing Students Mobilizing Against Cuts and all the other individuals, groups, and organizations who've mobilized in positive, creative resistance to this government's short-sighted cuts.

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

Honouring our Lifeblood Event

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on May 1st I had the honour to attend the Honouring our Lifeblood event along with numerous blood and stem cell donors, volunteers, community groups, and the partners of Canadian Blood Services at the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] Heritage Centre.

The evening focused on celebrating the unseen heroes within our province — the individuals who ensure those who need blood, blood products, stem cells, organs, or tissue. Mr. Speaker, throughout the evening I had the privilege to personally meet and listen to all the attendees who have had personal experiences and connections with ever-so-important blood product donations. It was an eye-opening experience to hear how donations have saved and healed countless individuals within our province and in our country.

I stand here today to not only share my experience in this event,

but to also advocate for the importance of donating blood because the fact of the matter is that half of all Canadians will either need blood or know someone who does need blood.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my sincere appreciation and gratitude towards Canadian Blood Services who provide an essential service to individuals in our province and in our country. Thank you.

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

Regina Pats Players Honoured at Western Hockey League Awards

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an exciting time of year to be a Pats fan, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Regina Pats were given four awards at the 2017 Western Hockey League Award Luncheon in Calgary. Pats head coach John Paddock was awarded both Coach of the Year and Executive of the Year. He has been a mentor and a leader to his young athletes, keeping them calm during the ups and downs of a regular season, and during the current playoff run.

Mr. Speaker, Sam Steel was named WHL [Western Hockey League] Player of the Year. Not only is he an exceptional athlete, but a role model for all young boys and girls who look forward to cheering him on week by week, hoping that one day they can be just like him.

Lastly, the Regina Pats were awarded the NHL [National Hockey League] Marketing and Business Award of the year. The owner group and business group teams work seven days a week to ensure that the dedicated fans and players are well taken care of as they continue to pack the stands in honour of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. From continuous game sell-outs to exciting between-period entertainment, this group has provided a high-quality, family-friendly entertaining event for fans of all ages.

The city is still buzzing from the incredible game six win against the Lethbridge Hurricanes this past Sunday. And the momentum is building as we are now just four wins away from the Memorial Cup. The WHL finals start tomorrow, with the Pats hosting the Seattle Thunderbirds.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I also didn't mention Ethan Bear from Ochapowace, who won defenceman of the year over Connor Hobbs. And a leader within the Seattle Thunderbirds, Turner Ottenbreit, who will be here on Friday, and his uncle is looking forward to watching him play.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me and Greg in congratulating the Regina Pats. Go Pats go.

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

Springtime in the Country

Mr. Nerlien: — Mr. Speaker, the calendar tells us that March 20th is the first day of spring. We in rural Saskatchewan will tell you that it is a much more personal thing:

When the morning dew is past and the frogs begin to croak
When the last remnants of flax straw will soon turn to smoke

When the snowbirds are all back from annual vacation
When spring auction sales are abuzz with anticipation

When kids of all ages are cold and wet and from each you hear
a shriek

When someone is catching the first fish now running in the
creek

When the smells of stew and biscuits reach out from open
window

When spring cleaning leaves room for early tomato plants to
grow

When talk around the kitchen table moves from winter woe
When the neighbours start deliberating on exactly what to grow

When the kids are in the yard with each a stick or hoe
When learning how water flows is something they must know

When last year's crops are hauled to town, bills paid, and credit
let

When seed drills, tractors, and till equipment is technically set

When each new calf is born and smells of first fields tilled
When robins sing their joyful sound and first steaks are outdoor
grilled.

Mr. Speaker, we know spring is really here, and it is for that reason we wish all of our agriculture community a safe and productive planting season. Thank you.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Question of Privilege

The Speaker: — Earlier today the Government House Leader raised a question of privilege under the provisions of rule 12 of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*. Upon receipt of this notice, in accordance with the rules, both House leaders were informed of the details of the case and the proposed question of privilege.

It is the responsibility of the Speaker to determine if a prima facie case of privilege has been established. Contempt of this Assembly is a serious charge which requires careful examination of the case and this Assembly's practices and precedents. I wish to inform the Assembly that I have not had sufficient time to reach a decision on this question, so for that reason, I shall defer my ruling.

Members are not to discuss or debate the matter of the possibility of leaked information. This is a very serious charge that I do not take lightly.

I ask all members to heighten the decorum in this Assembly. We should have vigorous debate in this Assembly on ideas and policies, but we should not debate the character of hon. members from both sides of the Assembly.

Today in question period, I will have zero patience for any

members that challenge the principles that this Assembly has been built on.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Details of Land Transaction

Mr. Wotherspoon: — You know, Mr. Speaker, the relationship between what the Premier says and what the facts are is growing more and more tenuous day after day on front after front. And it's on full display with the Sask Party's GTH [Global Transportation Hub] scandal, from the 300-acre giveaway to CP [Canadian Pacific] for free, or the \$11 million that were given away to two Sask Party supporters, all while the nuns and taxpayers got ripped off, Mr. Speaker.

So to the Premier: will he at the very least take some responsibility and admit that this 300-acre giveaway happened two full years after the Sask Party formed government? And will he also finally answer a question that he's ducked time and time again as to when he learned that the original seller of land in the Sask Party's GTH scandal, who of course made millions, was also in a direct business relationship with the then minister, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

[11:00]

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the early preamble of the member's question is factually incorrect. I would suggest to members opposite we've produced cabinet documents that show that it was the NDP [New Democratic Party] government that allocated \$33 million to in part help CPR [Canadian Pacific Railway] move the railway tracks to the GTH. Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, we think that was the right decision, but we were able to reduce the amount, reduce the cost significantly from the 33. But, Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge it started under the NDP.

But this is another occasion, I think, where the fact and the record needs to be corrected. This is serious. Moments earlier this morning, the Leader of the Opposition stood up to profess his unqualified support for independent schools, the likes of which . . . associate schools, the likes of which are here in the gallery today.

Mr. Speaker, when he was the Education critic in 2012, here's what he asked of our Minister of Education after we increased funding to those very schools. After we increased funding to those very schools, he said, his question was, and I quote November 15th, 2012 from *Hansard*:

Will the minister do the right thing? Will he stop diverting dollars from a publicly funded education system?

He went on to decry the fact that we were going to fund those very schools for which he professed his support. Mr. Speaker, I think consistency is important, not just with respect to the GTH issue but also with respect to funding of schools in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

Intent of Bill 40 and Ownership of Crown Corporations

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, that's a complete mischaracterization by the Premier of Saskatchewan, and we should suspect nothing less. It's what we see from him day after day with our Crowns, with our finances, with the GTH . . .

[Interjections]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The root of my question was pretty simple. It was, will the Premier come clean? And he said a whole lot, but basically to say no.

Mr. Speaker, I'll try another topic. Yesterday when talking about the Sask Party's schemes to scrap and sell off STC before Bill 40 had passed, the Premier said, "The advice was you can't because it's in the Act. And a wind-down's not defined, so you could consider that a privatization and in violation of the Act."

Mr. Speaker, just last week, the Minister of Justice, the minister responsible for Bill 40, was asked if the Sask Party's privatization bill was needed to scrap, chop up, or sell off STC. The minister said, "I would say no." No, Mr. Speaker. Why has this answer changed all of sudden now that Bill 40's been rammed forward and has become law, Mr. Speaker? Why wasn't the Premier of Saskatchewan straight with the people of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, there was both views coming from the Ministry of Justice and counsel that the government relies on with respect to a wind-down. Some were of the view that there was a chance that it could be challenged. The consensus view was that it probably wouldn't be successful. That's why the Attorney General would have answered as he did. Mr. Speaker, we think that Bill 40 now clarifies the situation.

I'm going to challenge the Leader of the Opposition again, however, because here's what else he had to say about the schools for which he professed unqualified NDP support. November 15 in the House in a question to the government after we announced funding to these schools, he said, "Mr. Speaker, almost one year ago that government forged ahead, diverting dollars from our publicly funded education system into funding new private schools."

Earlier on in March of that same year he said, "... this government is diverting already thin educational dollars to private independent schools. This move [he said] reduces equity, standards, and support for students ..." Well the member's heckling that this is politics. No, Mr. Speaker, this is about consistency.

Earlier today members opposite stood in their place and professed unqualified support for those schools, and we welcome that if they did. But, Mr. Speaker, now is the chance

for the member, the leader, the now interim leader of the NDP to stand up and say why just a few short years ago he decried funding to those very schools.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier is mischaracterizing this, and we should expect nothing less. And I guess if the Premier, the comment around new schools, memo to the Premier . . .

[Interjections]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Maybe a bit of late-breaking news for the Premier, but Luther and Notre Dame, these schools are not new in the province of Saskatchewan. They've served students for years and years and years, Mr. Speaker. But you know, this is a Premier that breaks his word and has broken trust with Saskatchewan people, and we see that with our Crown corporations.

You know, the Premier was far more clear yesterday in a scrum. He got the question. When he had a question, he said, quote . . . or the question was, "So Bill 40 allowed you to wind down STC where you couldn't have before?" His answer: "Correct."

Mr. Speaker, after all the bluster on the other side about how Bill 40 was nothing more than supposed housekeeping, at least the Premier is now finally admitting his true motivations. But no one is too excited, Mr. Speaker, because the Premier also tried to claim yesterday that "There will be no sell-off of a Crown. In fact under the legislation, a sell-off is impossible." Then he tried to desperately pitch his privatization bill as something that's going to "might strengthen the Crown," Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier tell us how Bill 40 made STC stronger? And why didn't he have the decency and backbone to take his . . .

The Speaker: — I have cautioned members not to question the character of hon. members. I'll let the Leader of the Opposition finish his question please.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Why wouldn't have the Premier of Saskatchewan at least not taken his Crown sell-off scheme to the people of Saskatchewan for a vote?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, as a result of Bill 40 there can be no sell-off. That's the news; that's the essence of the legislation. As a result of Bill 40 introduced and now passed in this legislature, privatization of those Crowns cannot happen, Mr. Speaker. In fact what can happen, Mr. Speaker, what can happen, however, is that Crown corporations can pursue the kinds of partnerships that the NDP advocated be pursued.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to read from some NDP talking notes, from when they were the government. The talking note is on SaskEnergy letterhead. And the issue, it says, is the government

planning to sell TransGas? Here is the key talking points it suggests to the government — to the NDP — of the day:

TransGas is a strong, well-run profitable business. We're always ready and willing to listen to anyone who is [this is the NDP now] interested in partnering with us in growing Saskatchewan's energy industry. If and when such a business arrangement is finalized, we will announce it.

By the way not before . . . No lobby registry, no disclosure that they met with Atco or TCPL [TransCanada Pipelines Limited]. That's what it says. The talking points go on. The NDP talking points on this very issue, which would now be enabled by Bill 40 that they oppose, the final talking point is:

Any business arrangement that we undertake will have two conditions. First, it will grow the company and keep jobs in Saskatchewan. And second, it will keep control of TransGas in the hands of its owners, the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

These NDP talking points could've been the drafting terms for Bill 40, Mr. Speaker.

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

Role of School Boards and Intent of Bill 63

Mr. Wotherspoon: — This is the same very Premier that went to the people of Saskatchewan just a year ago, looked them in their eyes, and told them that our Crowns are not for sale. And now before us we have legislation that allows . . . and schemes that are selling up to 49 per cent of all of our Crowns, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's answers like that and the actions of the Sask Party that are tearing apart the institutions, the foundations of what generations have built and that give us strength.

The Sask Party's latest bill gives the minister and cabinet overrule of local, democratically elected voices overseeing our kid's classrooms. Mr. Speaker, the amendments they brought forward do nothing to stop that. They do nothing to prevent the Sask Party from doing whatever they want in our kids' classrooms.

They've said time and time again, they don't want this bill. And they are trusting the Sask Party less and less; in fact 91 per cent of Saskatchewan people are against the Sask Party's attack on education. Mr. Speaker, they want their local voices to remain in education. So will the Premier finally do the right thing: listen, scrap Bill 63 and his indecent attack on our education system?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, incredibly the leader, the interim Leader of the NDP just characterized Bill 40 as an attack on the institutions. Bill 40 would allow for the Crowns to partner so long as the people of the province do not lose majority control. The government, the people must stay in control, but partnerships might be allowed if it strengthens the Crowns, if it creates jobs in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I just read a memo from the NDP. Now the

Deputy Leader of the NDP was in the cabinet that approved this talking point, and the member for Elphinstone was in the Calvert government that approved this plan, and so was the member for Saskatoon Centre. They approved a plan. They have talking points about how it was absolutely the correct thing for them to sell a part of TransGas so long as, so long as:

Any business arrangement that we undertake will have two conditions. First, it will grow this company and keep jobs in Saskatchewan. And second, it will keep control of TransGas in the hands of its owners, the people of the province . . .

When they did it, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't tearing at the fabric of the institutions. Mr. Speaker, why in the world do they have a different position today, except for politics?

Now with respect to the question of education funding, Mr. Speaker, or Bill 63, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that had Bill 63 been in existence, this government would have stepped in and stopped that lawsuit that has now put in peril and risk the very funding to associate schools. It's risked that funding. It's risked our separate and public system. Now, Mr. Speaker, we've said we'll use the notwithstanding clause on that particular court ruling. The Leader of the NDP has said he would advocate considering the notwithstanding clause.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding his two different positions he's stated today on funding associate schools, will he at least have one position in support of the government to invoke the notwithstanding clause, support our public system, our separate system, and the chance for us to properly fund faith-based schools, Muslim and Christian schools in the province of Saskatchewan?

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

Ms. Beck: — He has been very clear. We support adequate funding for all students in this province, and instead of dismissing concerns . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member.

Ms. Beck: — Instead of dismissing concerns and recklessly, recklessly creating division, it is past time that the Premier and the minister start listening to Saskatchewan people and finally start standing up for Saskatchewan education.

Last night in committee, it was the same old story. He had no defence for why this was a budget bill, not even any defence about why he needs these new, overarching powers. Mr. Speaker, he uses examples that are over a decade old, and yet he has spent the last five years as the Minister of Education and did nothing to make any of these changes that he now says are so urgent.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has changed course on some of his poor decisions before. Will he now, before it's too late, do the right thing and scrap Bill 63?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the purpose of Bill 63 is to make sure that we've got some clarity and that we've got the ability to make sure that we have good decisions that are being made. The member opposite talks about decisions that were made over 10 years ago. Mr. Speaker, those same decisions are problematic in today's world.

Mr. Speaker, we now have situations in the province where we're paying for more than one director in a school division. We now have situations where we can't agree on busing. But, Mr. Speaker, most importantly, we have a situation as a result of the Theodore school case where we've got a situation that's absolutely untenable, to try and move thousands and thousands and thousands of students from one school division to another. That is something that this government is not about. That's why we're using the notwithstanding clause.

I'd urge the members across to come on board and support that decision. Sooner or later, there will be legislation before the House. We'd ask them to stand up for the students of this province.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, he was a trustee. He was a board Chair. And he should know the important role that these local voices play, and he should be defending them. Instead, Mr. Speaker, the minister loves to use a few examples that he has up his sleeve to claim superiority over locally elected trustees.

Mr. Speaker, for each of the cases he brings up, he had and currently has, without Bill 63, the power to not approve their budgets. So, Mr. Speaker, if he is already so proud of the many things that are being done in our school system and he already has the power to get boards on the honest track but has just failed to properly use his discretion, what is the real reason that he is ramming Bill 63 forward?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we value the good work that school divisions do in our province. We think it's necessary that we have certain abilities to override them. We've made some House amendments to the bill. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to read from a media release from the Saskatchewan School Boards Association issued earlier today:

"We appreciate that the government listened to boards and the public and has now made some amendments to Bill 63," said Dr. Shawn Davidson, president of the SSBA. "Trustees are elected to be the voice of public education and we think it is vital those roles and responsibilities are preserved in law."

And that's exactly the amendments that were made to the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we want to sit down and work with those people, develop regulations that work for them and work best for the students of our province. That is the commitment that our

government has made — the students of the province, the teachers of our province, and the school divisions in our province. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are unable to take a position on anything to do with it, and like to walk both sides of the street. And, Mr. Speaker, we will hold them to account.

[11:15]

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, the minister is being very selective with his quotes today, and this bill is about giving the minister full control over our school divisions, period. The Sask Party is running roughshod over Saskatchewan people, and the amendments do nothing to change that. Mr. Speaker, the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association], the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation], school divisions, parents, and teachers all oppose this scheme to silence local voices in education and giving all decision-making powers to the minister and to the Sask Party.

Mr. Speaker, it was only after the Sask Party rushed Bill 40 into law that they finally admitted the truth about their motivations for that bill. Will the minister show that he has learned from that mistake? Will he come clean with the real reasons that he's ramming Bill 63 through? What schools does he want to close? How many divisions does he want to amalgamate or eliminate?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We proposed amendments to the legislation, amendments that were asked for by the SSBA. Do you know who voted against those amendments? The members opposite. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite talk about wanting to close schools. Mr. Speaker, I've sat in this House and stood in this House, and I've read from a list of 176 schools closed by the members opposite. The members opposite cannot come into this House and walk both sides of the street.

Mr. Speaker, they have yet to take a firm position on the Theodore school case. Mr. Speaker, that decision will have very profound impact on our system as it is now. It will affect separate schools. It will affect associate schools. It will affect independent schools; qualified independent, historical high schools. Mr. Speaker, we want to work through that. We want to be able to give parents and schools protection, Mr. Speaker, and I don't hear it coming from over there.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Closing of Saskatchewan Transportation Corporation

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier admitted they needed Bill 40 to scrap STC, period. But they didn't do their homework. They didn't even look into the true costs of scrapping and selling off STC — the cost to people's health, the cost to the economy, and to the government.

Mr. Speaker, they're slashing jobs and abandoning Saskatchewan people. The corrections, health care, social services, library, and on and on will all need to pay someone else to do what STC did so well. But the minister told me this

week in committee that the Sask Party didn't even look into the true cost. Mr. Speaker, how could they be so irresponsible to the workers, their families, and all of Saskatchewan people?

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

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said in the past many times, Mr. Speaker, it was a very difficult decision to wind down STC, especially as it affected, the effect it had on the 224 hard-working employees of STC, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank those employees for their service, Mr. Speaker.

However, Mr. Speaker, we did have to look again at the overall business: the subsidy going from \$25 in 2007 all the way up to \$94, Mr. Speaker, with the ridership declining 35 per cent since 2012 and down 18,000 rides just in the past year, Mr. Speaker. That was just unsustainable, Mr. Speaker, for us to continue operating at that level.

Mr. Speaker, I must remind people that the NDP were cutting routes in 1993-94, Mr. Speaker, when that subsidy was only \$2.18. And it was \$94 now, Mr. Speaker, so I feel we were very justified. Thank you very much.

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

Status of Saskatchewan Government Insurance

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's recap: the Education minister who says the Sask Party should be able to overrule any local school board at any time, the Premier who after months of Sask Party denials finally admitted that they needed Bill 40 to scrap STC, then we had the Minister of STC who wants to split hairs about what is and what is not a meeting. And now we know that when minister after minister and even the Premier said there were no offers on the table, the Minister for SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] admits that, in reality, there were 11 offers on the table. Mr. Speaker, now we're hearing that SGI employees are being warned of a possible sell-off.

Mr. Speaker, whatever happened to being held accountable? Whatever happened to looking the people of Saskatchewan in the eye and telling them the truth? Mr. Speaker, what are their plans for SGI?

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister in charge of SGI.

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Mr. Speaker, you know, I would . . . As often we have to do in this House, I need to stand and correct some of the statements made by the members opposite. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition said that on Tuesday night in committee when asked about SGI, I had skirted and dodged questions.

The member from Lakeview was there and she knows full well, Mr. Speaker, that I did not dodge any questions before answering them, Mr. Speaker. Well he would only need to consult with *Hansard* to know that when I was asked a question, I answered it directly. He did say that I had pitched

our criteria for considering strategic partners as some sort of a good deal. Mr. Speaker, I never used that phrase. I simply stated the criteria that we would consider were there to be an offer for SGI.

He also said I had meetings with 11 different entities and that is simply untrue, Mr. Speaker. Neither my staff nor I have ever had meetings or discussions with these 11 entities that he alluded to. Those discussions were directly made with the CEO [chief executive officer] of SGI, as I stated in estimates, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think the Leader of the Opposition would do well to actually watch . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Whoa, whoa. Quickly, I'll ask the minister to finish his response.

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — I think it would do the opposition leader well to review *Hansard*, to talk to the member from Lakeview before bringing such accusations. I'll not call into question his character as the Leader of the Opposition. However, I hope he begins to do the same for me, Mr. Speaker.

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

Reporting of Political Donations

Mr. Forbes: — There you go, Mr. Speaker. A meeting is not a meeting and who you talking to when you run into them. Well there you go. You don't play dodgeball, eh?

Well, Mr. Speaker, ministerial accountability used to mean something, but the Sask Party seems to have forgotten that. Mr. Speaker, after a decade of Sask Party games, spin, and lines, people are starting to have less and less faith in government. They see a \$60 million tax giveaway to corporations while their taxes go up on everything from kids' clothes to a night out, and they wonder who their government really is working for, Mr. Speaker.

Whenever we ask about getting big money out of politics, the Sask Party has nothing but excuses or attacks, but they never have a real answer. In the midst of all the Sask Party's doing to hurt Saskatchewan families and undo so much that Saskatchewan people have pride in, will they take that important step with us? Will they show the people of Saskatchewan that their government influence or favour cannot be bought? Will they finally join us and get big money out of Saskatchewan politics?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is a remarkable question coming from that member, Mr. Speaker, whose . . . During the last election, unions donated over \$356,000 to their campaign. . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . But that's okay. That's okay, Mr. Speaker. But there's no accountability, Mr. Speaker. During their leader's . . . during their . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — This is the final response in question period. I would ask all members to please be respectful and listen to the minister's response. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, the member knows that all registered parties are required to publicly report their donations and expenses, Mr. Speaker. And on top of that, Mr. Speaker, we have lobbying legislation in this province, legislation which was supported by the opposition, Mr. Speaker. So we have full transparency, Mr. Speaker, with respect to who is talking to politicians on this side of the House and on that side of the House too, Mr. Speaker.

But really, Mr. Speaker, when it comes right down to it, this is an accountable process. The lobbying legislation adds to the credibility of the system that we have in this province, Mr. Speaker, and it works just fine.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of Human Services.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 53, *The Provincial Health Authority Act* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Health.

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

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bills and Bill No. 53, *The Provincial Health Authority Act* and that the bill be now read a third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. The minister may proceed to move third reading. I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 53 — *The Provincial Health Authority Act*

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 53, *The Provincial Health Authority Act* be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — On division.

The Speaker: — Carried on division.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel — Third reading of this bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of Human Services.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 54, *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017*, a bilingual bill, without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in the Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Health.

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

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 54 and the bill be now read a third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. The minister may proceed to move third reading. I recognize the Minister of Health.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 54 — *The Provincial Health Authority Consequential Amendment Act, 2017/Loi de 2017 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Provincial Health Authority Act*

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 54 be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — On division.

The Speaker: — Carried on division.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Third reading of this bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of Human Services.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 63, *The Education Amendment Act, 2017*, a bilingual bill, with amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Deputy Premier.

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

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration of the Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 63 and the bill and its amendments be now read a third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. Why is the member from Regina Lakeview on her feet?

Ms. Beck: — Request to make comments with regard to third reading.

The Speaker: — Leave was granted. We will continue on. So when the question of leave was asked, it was leave to waive consideration in the Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 63, not leave for the member from Regina Lakeview to speak. It is not debatable, the motion on first and second reading, but she will have the opportunity to provide remarks on third reading. So we will now continue on with the motion. When shall the amendment be read a first time?

FIRST AND SECOND READINGS OF AMENDMENTS

Bill No. 63 — *The Education Amendment Act, 2017 Loi modificative de 2017 sur l'éducation*

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the amendments be now read a first and second time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that the amendments be now read a first and second time. This is a non-debatable motion. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First and second

reading of the amendments.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading. I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

**Bill No. 63 — *The Education Amendment Act, 2017*
*Loi modificative de 2017 sur l'éducation***

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

[11:30]

The Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm obviously anxious to enter some comments on third reading of Bill 63. And I will keep my comments brief.

This is a bill that has been universally panned and concerns raised by all members across the sector, across the province, from the North to the South, public, Catholic, urban, rural, united teachers, parents, community members united in their opposition to this bill in the overreach and the minister's new ability to force really damaging cuts through our education system.

I think we've been very clear about where we stand on this bill, and I would urge all members to vote against this bill and in favour of public education, publicly funded education in this province for all students. Thank you.

The Speaker: — All right. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Carried. Call in the members.

[The division bells rang from 11:31 until 11:54.]

The Speaker: — All those in favour of the motion please rise.

[Yeas — 47]

Wall	Moe	Stewart
Wyant	Reiter	Morgan
Harpauer	Doherty	Duncan
Beaudry-Mellor	Hargrave	D'Autremont
Heppner	Boyd	Marit
Tell	Eyre	Merriman
Harrison	Ottobreit	Ross
Weekes	Hart	Kirsch
Bradshaw	Steinley	Makowsky

Phillips	Lawrence	Wilson
Campeau	Docherty	Michelson
Doke	Cox	Olauson
Steele	Young	Fiaz
Dennis	McMorris	Bonk
Carr	Nerlien	Lambert
Buckingham	Kaeding	

The Speaker: — All those opposed please rise.

[Nays — 10]

Wotherspoon	Vermette	Chartier
Belanger	Sproule	Forbes
Rancourt	Beck	McCall
Meili		

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the motion, 47; those opposed, 10.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Third reading of this bill.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Gardiner Park.

Support for Separate, Public, and Faith-Based Schools

Mr. Makowsky: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to join in debate on this side on behalf of the government, with a few other members that are going to join as well. And I'll just remind those folks that might be watching this afternoon or those in the gallery what this motion is about. It's a very important motion, and we've heard a lot about it in the news the last few days. And it's basically to ensure non-Catholic students can continue to attend Catholic schools and ensure other faith-based schools outside the separate school system continue to receive provincial funding. Again maybe you'll know a recent court case, that has brought this certainly to the forefront here in our province. And it's a very important issue to many people that attend both the public and the separate system and the faith-based schools as well.

I might have some insight into this, Mr. Speaker. I'm trained as a teacher. I think a couple members opposite are teachers as well. We have several former school board trustees on this side, and they've served the people well and now have moved on to this Assembly.

And I've only taken schooling and only have that experience in the public system. I went to public schools growing up. I went to high school, university, U of S [University of Saskatchewan]. And then in my teaching time, again I was only mostly a substitute teacher, so I don't profess to know all what teachers go through. I have some idea, but again you don't have to do marking or not a lot of phone calls with parents and those types of things. You're kind of just there for the day. But I guess you

get some idea, Mr. Speaker. And I was very happy. I think I got a very good education. I had great teachers, and I'm sure many members of the House will agree with that. In the public system, they certainly do a good job.

And now my kids . . . My wife is Catholic, and when we got married, we decided that our kids would be raised Catholic. We're talking about parent choice. I think this motion is definitely about parent choice, Mr. Speaker. In that decision, I'm not sure how much choice I actually had upon our getting married, but I will say, maybe I'd better say it was a great choice to get married to Tami . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . There we go.

[12:00]

But again, our province has been well served by the separate system for over 100 years. And I think it's important to note right back well before Confederation, the first settlers, the first schools in our country, what would become our country, in even the 1600s, the first schools were faith-based schools from the Catholic Church mostly in Quebec. If I remember from reading some time ago, the first school in the Northwest Territories — what became Alberta — in 1842 was a separate Catholic school, so the very first school in that way.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've been well served by that system since Saskatchewan joined Confederation. Of course in 1867, when we became a country with the four provinces, minority rights were a very important part of that. Of course I'm not a historian or scholar on Confederation, but I question whether we would've joined Confederation if there wasn't those choice in schools and those rights for the separate system, Mr. Speaker.

In my own family, as I mentioned, my kids go to a Catholic school. They get a great education. They absolutely . . . the teachers there. I think of my youngest son's teacher. Every week we get an email about, boy, all sorts of things that are going on in the school. It takes a while to read. I can't imagine how much time she puts into that. They're just professional. They do a great job over at St. Gabriel.

When I think back to my grandfather, he was unfortunately orphaned at 12 years old, and he was taken in by the Catholic school in Yorkton in those days, and that was in the 1920s. And you know, I'm glad there was that option for him. I don't know the lay of the land back then of course, but they took him in, and they had room and board for him. He stayed there most of the year. And it was an important institution, and those folks obviously did great work.

My brother . . . I went to the public system. Past the time that I started school, they started a Ukrainian immersion program, but it was in the separate system. It was at St. Goretti in Saskatoon. And you had to get up early in the morning; I think he caught the bus at 7:30, was home by 4:30. So a bit of a longer school day. It was all the way across town.

But that was an option. That was an option. My parents could choose to send him to Ukrainian immersion. It wasn't available in the public system, and so that's the situation. So I never really got to go to school with my brother. That's kind of a different situation, but that was what my parents chose to do,

and I think he, again, was well served by that system.

Real quick, when I went to university, I took a class at St. Thomas More College at the U of S. It was recommended to me by . . . There was a particular teacher that taught English there. It wasn't her fault, with my English skills. She was a great teacher, and I'm glad I took that class. I'm glad that was available to me. I wonder what the members opposite . . . just sort of as an insert here, I don't know where they stand on post-secondary funding, public funding for those folks in the separate area. I'm not sure where they stand. I hope maybe they can clarify that.

I remember — I better watch my time here — training camp when I played football, it was at Luther collegiate at the U of R [University of Regina]. And it was right beside Campion College. I still remember that meeting room, the theatre on the second floor there, and I particularly remember the beds. The separate and the Catholic, they do a great job, but their bed design needs a little work, for the bigger guys. And there are certainly individuals way bigger than I that fit into those dorms. But I still have very good memories of training camp being housed there.

And I know many . . . I think we all do. All of us have family members, friends, close friends that go to the faith-based schools, particularly here in Regina. I think we're very served well by that system, as I've mentioned, not only the separate but the faith-based as well. I'll talk about it in just a second. Of course I'm not sure what the hang-up from the NDP is on those schools, honestly, and maybe I'll get into that in a little bit. They still need 24 credits to graduate. They have all the same standards from the Ministry of Education, and they still do a good job. They get a great education, Mr. Speaker.

I think of, it was mentioned earlier, the Luther Invitational Tournament. Like what a jewel on the sporting map of Regina. It would be a shame if that was no longer there, Mr. Speaker. It's been around for 60-plus years.

I have a little bit of a relationship with the Outlook LCBI [Lutheran Collegiate Bible Institute]. Many, many years ago was when I played Huskie football. We had several teammates. That was a bit of a football factory back then. And maybe I won't go into that. I had some stories about that, but my time is running out as it always does on these debates. And of course we think about Notre Dame college, Mr. Speaker. My seatmate made sure that I mentioned a few of the hockey players; he's a hockey guy. So you think of Lecavalier, Richards, Clark, Schwartz. Keith Aulie, I mean, he's a good Saskatchewan boy. Part of his family does good work in this building. And on behalf of the people of the province, Curtis Joseph, Rod Brind'Amour, you know, they've represented Canada well on the international stage, all from that faith-based education, Mr. Speaker.

And of course Mother Teresa right here in Regina, I think the member from Coronation Park knows it well. I've been to a few things there, as several of us have. The member mentioned, I think earlier, we had a gingerbread building contest — my son, along with him and I believe your CA [constituency assistant]. And the part that I think put us over the top . . . We won that. You said we were just participating. No, no, Mr. Speaker. We

won that event, the gingerbread building contest. It raised money, I think, for Hope's Home, I believe. And I think what got us over the top is the gingerbread hot tub that . . . inspired by the member from Coronation Park.

So we had a few question and answer sessions there as well. They do great jobs. They do a great job, sorry, at Mother Teresa. And just a few words about what they do. They:

. . . select students primarily based on two criteria [this is from their website] — need and motivation. Students and their families will take part in a clearly defined admissions process and most will come from the North Central and Core areas of Regina.

They'll provide transportation for students that live within the areas, and they have several enrichment programs. They're involved in enriching activities, as I mentioned: cooking, zumba, mindfulness, babysitting, football, art, hip hop, basketball, improv, quilting, beading, singing, yoga, cheerleading, history club, quilling, engineers building, drama, and a three-week summer program.

They have an extensive school day. It begins at 8 a.m., ends at 4:30, provide meals, get the kids to and from there. Again, a lot of the students have seen tough times before, and they find success here at Mother Teresa. It notes on their website, and it's very transparent, their attendance record. It's well over 90 per cent, and I would guess there probably had been less in other situations, Mr. Speaker.

Boy, they do a lot of great things. They support students, not only when they're in Grade 6, 7, and 8. They support them right through to high school. They mentor them. They have mentors. They help with teachers, administrators. They do a . . . [inaudible] . . . work. The result is graduate support made 700 contacts with the students after they graduated from Mother Teresa. Attendance rate was 90.7 per cent. So their attendance at Mother Teresa was well over the 90's. It continues beyond to high school. The pass rate, Mr. Speaker, for high school students was 94 per cent — 94 per cent. They do great work.

Just a few quick quotes from some of the students, and again I'm quoting:

I love this school. I love the after-school programs, the teachers, staff, and the subjects we do. When I come to this school, I know I won't be judged and I will be loved. I appreciate that the teachers care about the students the same no matter what they do. I like that they give us tools to help us when we get older. I learned how to play football at MTMS.

I know here there's a picture of two students that went on to play Sask Selects, a program I'm familiar with. They got to go down to Austin, Texas to play tackle football a couple of years ago. "I appreciate how the teachers love us no matter what, and they help us when we're in trouble. There's always laughter and excitement."

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, they're doing extremely good work there, Mr. Speaker, I think something this and the public sector does a good job of. But they also team with the private sector.

Now I know the members opposite get a little nervous when they hear about that, but there's scholarships provided by MLT [MacPherson Leslie & Tyerman]. I saw earlier the Riders, they gave \$100,000 to Mámawêyatitán, the new school there to help along with them, Mr. Speaker. There's a social impact bond Mosaic Stadium did for Mother Teresa, Mr. Speaker, and a million dollars to help those students achieve more. This can only be a good thing, Mr. Speaker. This can only be a good thing.

You know, Mr. Speaker, basically this motion, I think for me, is about choice, Mr. Speaker. I think it's great for the taxpayers as well. I think there's this idea across the way that there's a zero sum game all the time. Because somebody makes a million bucks playing hockey over here, somehow I'm paid less because of that.

And I think that idea extends to this debate right here, Mr. Speaker. They think because there's other people outside the public system that that somehow weakens the public system in itself, and that's just not the case. I think it's complementary, and it helps for the taxpayers, Mr. Speaker. They only pay roughly 50 to 80 per cent of the first pupil's payment to pay for those students. Taxpayers in those faith-based schools, they don't pay for busing. They don't pay for any capital, Mr. Speaker, and so I think those are only good situations, Mr. Speaker.

So I think this school, all of the faith-based schools, they do a great job, Mr. Speaker. I think this is all about choice, Mr. Speaker. This is about choice for parents. We see success in choice in some of the things the NDP don't like, Mr. Speaker — in MRIs [magnetic resonance imaging], in surgeries, liquor stores, Mr. Speaker. I know that stuff makes them uncomfortable. I think choices drive innovation, competition to produce higher quality — in general, not necessarily in this case — better goods and services, and it lowers costs, Mr. Speaker. Choices, as always, choices empower people. Choices empower people. No choice or just one choice, that empowers bureaucrats and government, Mr. Speaker.

I think and I hope the members, they clarify their statements. I hope the Education critic . . . I think that would say a lot if she didn't get up and speak to this motion. And speaking of the motion, I will get to that. And I'm going to move:

That this Assembly supports the government's commitment to take the necessary steps to ensure non-Catholic students can continue to attend Catholic schools and to ensure other faith-based schools outside the separate school system continue to receive provincial funding.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I so move.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Gardiner Park has moved:

That this Assembly supports the government's commitment to take the necessary steps to ensure non-Catholic students can continue to attend Catholic schools and to ensure other faith-based schools outside the separate school system continue to receive provincial

funding.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter into this debate today and to have the opportunity to talk about education in our province. And certainly that has been a focus for myself as critic but for our whole caucus — not just today, not just yesterday, but long-standing commitment to education in this province.

We have educators on this side, public school board trustees, and people who have worked in their communities to support children, both in school and out of school. And so this is not an issue that we take lightly or that we come to late in the game.

[12:15]

And I also want to say that I think that there's a real need here to show some leadership, to show some calm, to show some respect for the very, very important issue that is funding for education for all students in this province. This is not something that I consider to be a game, a political game or otherwise. This is exactly the reason why I stand here today, is to support the chances for all kids in this province. And the best way that we can do that is to ensure that all children in this province have access to a strong education and that we support that with our words, with our deeds, and with dollars. That we make choices that invest in our students and not divest in our students, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing that I wanted to . . . I know that there are some guests here with us and perhaps guests listening at home. And I take some very strong concern at some of the misinformation that has been disseminated about this issue, in fact emails sent, emails sent by members opposite stating that we, the NDP has a plan or don't support the funding of associate schools, for example.

Mr. Speaker, I think that there's a need for clarity, and I want to clarify a few things. One of them is that we have no position to reduce funding to associate schools, historical schools, independent schools, or any school that receives public money. Clearly what this fight has been about, for the past year, is going around this province and trying to support education, support dollars flowing into our schools, all schools.

There's a lot of concern out there about the decisions that were made in this budget. There was a decision made to take \$60 million from our students, all students, in this budget, at the same time as there is a \$60 million corporate tax giveaway. Mr. Speaker, that's a decision that is made on that side. So to be talking about, you know, support for classrooms at a time when you're taking \$60 million out of all classrooms in this province, I hardly know what to say about that.

The other thing that I want to say here is that there's a need for some clarity around this issue, and that is the Theodore decision. This is a complicated, long-standing issue in this province. It has roots back into the very formation of this province, certainly back into the way that the school systems, both school systems, were set up. And the Theodore case itself

goes back 12 years.

We've been very clear: we support the decision to appeal. And I was very interested and a bit surprised last night in committee to hear from the Minister of Education that he was less clear about the government's decision to enter into that appeal, even though it would support the Catholic board's appeal. So that is something that I have a lot of concern about, Mr. Speaker. This is not something that we should be grandstanding about. There has been talk of the notwithstanding clause. That is a very, very significant measure that should be given consideration but not be entered into lightly, and certainly not like this. Not to distract from Bill 63. It's so clear, Mr. Speaker, what is going on here. This is a bill that gives unprecedented power to the minister. It goes against the wishes of people across this province.

Going back last year when the government first started talking about transformational change, there were a thousand trial balloons floated up and there was a lot of concern in the sector, a sector that already was under attack, feeling disrespected, feeling not consulted, feeling disregarded, blamed, in the case of many teachers and those who work in our schools, and administrators. This was the context in which we threw up this idea of transformational change.

An Hon. Member: — They did.

Ms. Beck: — They did. That this context . . . Mr. Perrins presented a report that very clearly stated that there was no appetite for the loss of local voice. Mr. Perrins stated that there was no appetite for further amalgamations. And those pieces were only strengthened by the panel that met after, at the beginning of this year.

Then this bill showed up as a budget bill, Bill 63, which means we only get five hours of debate on it, and we already saw how quick the decision was rushed on that. But, Mr. Speaker, people are paying attention. And members opposite voted knowing full well that they did so against the wishes of people in their communities, against teachers, against school boards — public school boards, Catholic school boards, northern school boards, southern school boards — communities all around this province.

Mr. Speaker, when I presented my petitions today I noted a number of folks from the Yellow Grass and Weyburn, Fort Qu'Appelle area. As I said, names that I recognize, and names that, you know, aren't necessarily NDP supporters, but people who I am proud to bring their voice here and to stand up for them, and to let you know what they think about this bill, and what they think about attempts to divide and distract.

We have an opportunity in this province to do something really important with education. We have something very . . . an important, an important possibility here. People are paying attention . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member is heckling from her seat, Mr. Speaker. I think that what is being missed here is the opportunity to actually envision what we could do for our kids in this province, all kids.

We have more people than ever paying attention to education. Ninety-one per cent of people in this province are opposed to the cuts by this government, Mr. Speaker. We have a time when

we have the business community engaged. They want to put education at the top of the list. We have people who've gone all around this province and they say, it is time we really think about where we're at with regard to education in this province and where we could be. How do we ensure that kids get the education that they need so that they have the tools that they need and that our whole province has the tools that we need to move forward into this century.

And so to see this so disregarded and this gamesmanship happen around kids is really, really disappointing and frankly shameful. Shameful — \$60 million out of our kids' classrooms at a time that you are giving corporate tax breaks to the tune of \$60 million. That is unconscionable. That is a decision. This is not politics. That is a deliberate decision that is made. And, you know, and members opposite don't want to hear this because I know they're hearing the same thing from their constituents. And I could not be more clear. Our support is fully, fully for all students receiving public dollars in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And I think that members opposite by their bluster, by their attempts to pull everything in are just belying the fact that they know what I know — that people are watching. They are angry about these cuts. They are angry about Bill 63. They want it stopped. Even the quote that the minister stood up today and talked about the SSBA, you know, he was very selective with that quote. They said they were happy that some amendments were put back in, but they want the government to engage in relationship, in transparency, and sit down and rewrite the whole Act for the situation that we find ourselves in in this province today and going into the future. And, Mr. Speaker, members on this side are so, would be so happy to enter into that debate, to really put a focus on our kids instead of playing crass, divisive politics with our kids, Mr. Speaker.

You know, budgets really speak to the values of government, and I think that you saw with this budget exactly where the priorities of this government lay and, Mr. Speaker, I'm disappointed by that. Thank you.

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

Mr. Oluson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to stand in my place today and support the motion as presented by the member from Regina Gardiner Park.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is all about choice. The Theodore decision is all about choice and choice for the parents to pick and choose which education they're going to have for their child. As a government, we stand for fair and equitable education throughout our province. This Theodore decision will affect between 5 and 10,000 kids in every corner of Saskatchewan.

Freedom of choice is a basic right in our country, Mr. Speaker. Where our children are educated has to be one of the most important decisions that a parent can make. And we need to ensure that they continue to have that ability. If ever there was a motion that the opposition should support, this is the one.

Mr. Speaker, my parents, Joan and Mel, were both Catholic school teachers. My father was a principal in Saskatoon, and

my mom taught for 35 years as well. So being raised as a Catholic with parents that were both teachers in the Catholic system, I didn't have much of a choice. They had a choice, but I didn't have much of a choice whether I attended Catholic or public school.

But having said that, there was the choice. Cardinal Leger School, where I attended, was a great school — great teachers, great administration, principal, sports teams, arts, drama. But so was College Park, just across the park. They had the same opportunities that I had when I went to Cardinal Leger. But, Mr. Speaker, many of the families in my school and many of my friends weren't Catholic. Some of them were Protestant, Lutheran, you name it, Mr. Speaker. We had every religion in that school.

They had the choice to go to that school. Now why they made that choice, I'm not sure. It could be many different reasons. It could be the teachers, could be the school sports teams because we were pretty dominant in the late '80s when I went there. But whatever the decision that their parents made, they had the choice. And that's what's being taken away in this court ruling out of Theodore.

We can't fund one student and not the other in a school that was chosen by their parents. It doesn't matter what school that they choose to go to — whether it's public, Catholic, independent, associated schools — we can't as a government make those choices for parents. Choices, Mr. Speaker, should be made by the parents and we're not in the business of picking for those parents.

After I heard about the decision in Theodore, Mr. Speaker, I looked back and I thought, how would that affect my family right now? And I came up with a fairly good analogy and an anecdote and I'll share it here. My son Connor graduated from grade 8 in a Catholic school, went to St. Joseph High School in Saskatoon, another Catholic school. When he was halfway through Grade 10, he decided that to follow his dream of becoming a mechanic, an automotive service technician, which is what he wanted to do. He wanted to enrol in the public high school, Walter Murray, Mr. Speaker, because they had an automotive service technician program and he was interested in it.

He was allowed to go and transfer into Walter Murray, Mr. Speaker, and take classes that enable him now to register and enrol at Sask Polytechnic. It gave him the bedrock. It gave him the opportunity to see what he was getting into, number one; and number two, see if he would thrive at it. Mr. Speaker, he won a couple of awards at Walter Murray as he was going through the program and I'm quite proud of that.

If the role was reversed, if the situation was reversed and we weren't Catholic and Connor was going to a public school, but yet St. Joseph had that program, my son, under this decision, wouldn't be allowed — unless I paid for it — to go to that program, get the education that he really wanted to follow his dream and become that mechanic that he is going to be. And I'm glad, because my car needs repairs all the time. But he wouldn't be allowed to do that unless I paid for it out of my pocket, even after I've paid all the same taxes that everybody else has had.

Mr. Speaker, there's also another story that I'll touch briefly on. The member from Saskatoon Westview, his daughter has special needs. When she was going to look at entering the school system, they enrolled her at St. Augustine School — once again a good Catholic Saskatoon University school — because they had individual programs for children that needed that little extra help that could help her before she got into the school system. That was at St. Augustine, Mr. Speaker. Now the member from Saskatoon Westview isn't Catholic. That program was offered at that Catholic school at that time, and it enabled her to not fall behind. She was able to stay with her classmates and able to continue her education and not fall behind. Mr. Speaker, the Theodore decision would stop that unless, once again, the parents can pay for it. Mr. Speaker, that's not fair. It's not equitable, and it takes away choice.

[12:30]

Our government supports both public and Catholic school systems. We also support the historical high schools, associated schools, and qualified independent schools. A couple of them are in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatoon Christian School, and in Saskatoon University, the Saskatoon Misbah School. We have a heritage and a history that we need to protect.

Our government has been a strong supporter of education, Mr. Speaker, throughout our mandates. I hear every day that we're not . . . that we're cutting, that we're not providing the education or the dollars that we need to for our students.

What I can't understand is why the members opposite think that, because we fund these other schools and these other systems, that it takes away from the public system. It doesn't. We're not sharing the same pie. We made the pie bigger, Mr. Speaker. And I've got numbers here. I've got numbers here that back that up. In 2007 overall funding for education was less than a billion dollars. In 2016 it was over \$2 billion, Mr. Speaker. That's an increase of 114 per cent when student enrolment only went up 10 per cent. Operating budget 1.41 billion in 2007, 1.86 billion in 2016, up 32 per cent. Overall, we have invested in capital spending in our schools, Mr. Speaker, \$1.5 billion. We've opened 40 new schools, 25 major renovations, Mr. Speaker. We've opened 15,200 daycare spaces over the last 9 years, Mr. Speaker, up 62 per cent. We've added 161 pre-kindergarten programs, up 104 per cent. And we created the first early years plan, Mr. Speaker. I would say that we're investing in our education system, Mr. Speaker.

Now it's hard to believe that anyone in this place would support taking away a parent's right to choose an education for their children, and yet that's what we hear day after day after day in this place, Mr. Speaker. November 15th, 2012, I'd like to quote from *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, and I quote Mr. Wotherspoon:

Mr. Speaker, almost one year ago that government forged ahead, diverting dollars from our publicly funded education system into funding new private schools . . . Beyond the risk of fragmenting education, it takes dollars away at a time that we need to properly fund and support education in this province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. After what the figures that I just read to you, what they say,

there's nothing further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. We're supporting all education and all students in our province, Mr. Speaker, at record levels. Mr. Speaker, we are protecting choice for parents to send their child to the school that will provide the best education for them, for the future and beyond.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I started out by saying. I'm going to support the motion from the member from Regina Gardiner Park. I'm going to stand with the students and the parents in this province, and I'm going to continue to do the work that our government is doing, especially as it relates to the Theodore decision. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, I was elected fairly recently in a by-election, and one of the things that I heard a lot on the doorstep . . . There was a pretty common conversation. I'd knock on the door and say my name and say what I was doing there, and before I'd even finish the people at the door would say, we're educators. We'll take a sign.

And that was before this budget. That was before Bill 63. But it was a pretty constant refrain, that people who are involved in the education system, people who had children in the education system were really concerned about the direction of this government. I'm quite certain that if we were having that by-election again today, I'd have even more of those types of conversations.

And we see that. I think we see evidence of that in the types of rallies that have been going on around the province. Rallies like the one yesterday on the steps of this building where we saw a couple hundred people at least out there — students, teachers, parents, all sorts of people in the community — not happy with Bill 63, not thinking we should go down that route. So we've already got . . . And why is that relevant? Obviously we're not debating Bill 63. But it's relevant because it speaks to the confidence that the people of this province have in this government regarding education. It speaks to the fact that the people of this province, they support quality, accessible, publicly funded education, as do we. As do we, as a party in Saskatchewan. That means, it means public and separate schools. It means associate schools. It means your historical schools. And we support all of those schools, Mr. Speaker.

And Saskatchewan is a special place. You know, we're a special place in some ways. Perhaps the last place in North America where, if you go to a good school, it's a public school. There are no private schools . . . people don't pay extra money to go to schools in general, in Saskatchewan, the way they do in other parts of this country, other parts . . .

An Hon. Member: — Yes, they do.

Mr. Meili: — A very minor amount. A very minor amount. In the majority of this province, the majority of students are in the public system, and it's publicly funded education. And even those associate schools, which you're referring to, receive public support. That's a pretty wonderful thing that you don't have people having to go deep into their pockets to have access

to these schools. If you go to a good school it's because . . . If you go to any school in this province, you're going to a good school.

Mr. Speaker, that's why this discussion before us is so important. It's so important that we're able to preserve that nature, that all of those schools that receive public support — associate schools, historical schools, and the major schools, the publicly funded and Catholic separate schools — they continue to be within the public system. They continue to have that support so that they're able to thrive, so that we don't see a split. And that's why this is so important, and it's why we have been so clear. That's why we've been so clear in saying that we support Catholic schools. It's why we are so clear in saying we support public schools, and why we're so clear in saying that we need to see this decision appealed.

We need the clarity on what is really meant in the law, and we need the time to actually think through the depths of this issue. But the fact of the matter is that those things are before us. The opportunity for clarity, as we take this from a lower court to a higher court, and the opportunity for time as that appeal process continues. Which is why it does appear to be a bit hasty, and as my colleague from Regina Lakeview has suggested, a bit political to run headlong into the notwithstanding without even seeing whether or not this government is committed to putting its own appeal in, which is a big question for me. Why have we gone so far to the notwithstanding clause? It may be the thing to do, but going there before we even see if this government is actually going to appeal the decision. Are they going to join alongside the Catholic school board and appeal the decision? That still has not been clear.

So that tells me what this is really about is that it's a distraction. It's a distraction from this budget, this budget with which people are very frustrated. It's a distraction from the scandals, the scandals of the GTH, the scandals of the Regina bypass. And it's a scandal from their own record on education, Mr. Speaker.

Because we've got a group here that's trying to present themselves as the great defenders, the great defenders of education. It's really, really hard to swallow this argument that we've got the great defenders of education in front of us. We have in front of us a government that has cut at every level — pre-K [pre-kindergarten], K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12], and post-secondary. This budget has severe cuts to education. There's your commitment to defending quality education — \$60 million out of K to 12 alone. And as my colleague . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate it. As my colleague has so clearly pointed out, a loss of \$60 million from the public education system and \$60 million cut in corporate tax cuts — that shows you where these great defenders of education are, where their real priorities are. They're not in making sure that our classrooms have enough supports. We are already hearing from school boards that they're going to have . . . from school divisions, they're going to have to have larger class sizes. That they're not going to have supports like educational

assistants, teachers' assistants. There's not going to be enough English as an additional language support for that large number of new immigrants who need that kind of support. It's getting to be more difficult to be a teacher. It's going to be more difficult to be a student, Mr. Speaker, and that is directly connected to these cuts.

We're also seeing the cuts of things like school supplies for families who are living in poverty no longer having school supplies covered. Just making it more difficult to be a student, Mr. Speaker.

And of course it doesn't end at K to 12. We've seen the 5.6 per cent cut in universities, colleges. We've already seen job losses in Sask Polytechnic. We're very likely to see job, program losses, or tuition increases in the universities.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've got significant disinvestment in education at every phase. We even saw the effort in this budget to eliminate a great deal of funding, the majority of the funding, for libraries in this province. Yes, that's been walked back, walked back reluctantly, walked back after weeks of defending it as the right choice. Only under significant public pressure was that actually returned. It would be very wise of this government to listen to that public pressure, to make those investments in education instead of cutting corporate taxes. But no, instead they're appealing to distractions, trying to focus on other things because they don't want to walk back those poor decisions.

And, Mr. Speaker, now we saw today, we saw today the passing of Bill 63, a bill that takes away the local control of schools. We've already seen cuts to funding for governance so that it's harder for schools, Catholic and public school board, to be able to actually organize themselves, actually run their operations the way they ought to. Now we're seeing this change with Bill 63, where that governance will no longer even reside in their hands, Mr. Speaker, with the moving from legislation to regulation of so many elements — the number of trustees, their compensation, the spending on capital, spending on operating budgets. This is a significant overreach where now instead of changing through legislation, this government can now change essentially on a whim what's going on at the level of the local school board.

You know, this is a long-standing approach. We saw this in the past with this government with changes to mill rates, and now we're seeing this with Bill 63. We heard the president of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association saying that they're looking to make school boards the face and no longer the voice of education in the province. And we heard the minister today try to justify this and say oh, it's just fine. We've made some amendments. The Saskatchewan School Boards Association's just fine. It's not true. The STF, the SSBA, they're still not in favour of these changes, Mr. Speaker. They still would've liked that bill scrapped. They're still disappointed that it passed.

And that disappointment is consistent with what was heard in a province-wide consultation where it was very clear, the message from the people of this province was very clear. They did not want these changes. They didn't want amalgamation of school boards. That was made clear. But they wanted to . . . Why didn't they want that? They wanted to maintain the local voice. And there's no question about that message having come

through loud and clear in the reports around those meetings.

And yet here we have this significant power grab. So you'll excuse me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I don't feel confident in this government taking over education. I don't feel confident in this government dealing with the complexities of this very serious case, this case that has emerged from the Theodore case, this discussion of the Catholic and public school boards. I don't feel that we can really trust this government, when they made so many mistakes already, when they've cut so much in education already, to be able to manage this very important file, Mr. Speaker. I don't think we should see this government managing school boards out of the office of the Minister of Education, and I don't have confidence in them completing a decent job of this effort. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Phillips: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to enter this 75-minute debate. I have a bit of history behind me when it comes to school divisions. I was a member of the board for nine years in Melfort. I spent three years as facilities chairman, three years as finance chairman, three years as chairman of the board, and in that time I learned a great deal. I learned about, to respect teachers, to respect students, and to respect the taxpayers. And it was . . . Once you see the inner workings of the school divisions and the way they work, you understand it so much better.

[12:45]

To me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this motion works in two parts. It has two pieces to it that we have to look at independently. We have to look at the choice for the students and the parents, and we have to say, is it fair, knowing that all these students are our children. They're people in Saskatchewan who's growing up. So it starts for me with my daughter and her husband who lived in Saskatoon, had a neighbourhood school, one very close to them, decided not to go to that. And even though they were Protestant, they went to the Catholic school because it had a better arts program for my grandson, Justice.

And I suppose I look at that, they made that decision based on what they could do, what it would do for their child. Is that wrong? That in this case, if it goes forward, they could still go there, but they wouldn't be funded by the government to go there. That child would not be funded. Is that fair? Is that right? Can anybody make any sense of that at all?

When they talk about real estate, they talk about location, location, location. And so you move next door to . . . where a school right across the street, that that school is a separate school and you can't go to that. Your children, our Saskatchewan children, be educated by a Saskatchewan system, but if you go to that school, you're not funded. Is that fair? Is that right? It just does not make any sense.

So we have a school in Theodore; we have a school in Englefeld that I consider, I like to number them 177 and 178 because while the NDP were proficient at getting rid of 176 schools, they missed two because the communities fought back and they worked hard. And they kept their school in Theodore,

and they kept their school in Englefeld. Now I almost have a feeling they're gunning for them again. And they're going after trying to get that number 177 and number 178, because they're still holding a grudge that they were able to stand up to the original onslaught of the NDP government.

They stand there, and they criticize us for what? For having children in Englefeld and children in Theodore that couldn't go to that school or could go but have to pay \$10,000 a year? Because that's what it would seem they would believe.

A Muslim child in Regina can go to a Muslim school, a faith-based school, if they pay for it, according to them. If they pay for it, according to them, according to the interim leader of the NDP, not the future leader, but the interim leader who said on November 15th, 2012 in *Hansard*, "Will the minister do the right thing?" And he's talking about faith-based schools:

Will the minister do the right thing? Will he stop diverting dollars from a publicly funded education system? Will he put forward a plan that supports all students in this province?

Well I would suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a plan for that. This is exactly a plan for that. This is saying that we will fund a child going to school in Saskatchewan. That's what it's about. It's not about all these different places and everything else. It's about funding children to go to school in Saskatchewan.

The second part of this is the physical part of this and the financial part of this, of taking 10,000 students out of a system that has worked well for over 100 years, taking 10,000 off this system, leaving holes in schools, and moving it to this system.

Now the opposition has been watching Alberta, and obviously there's no end of money so . . . but 10,000 students. The average school in Saskatchewan is 238 students. I am very proud that this government has built 40 new schools. However, however, you divide 10,000 students by 238, we would have to build another 42 schools to house those students in there.

Now there was a time, and there was a time not that long ago when I was on the school division in Melfort, and our school could probably hold those students. They could hold more students because our young people were leaving. And they were having children in Alberta, and they were having children in Manitoba and in BC [British Columbia] and everything else. And our population, during the wondrous times of the opposition, was dropping. And they were dropping in our young people. And we all remember . . . Maybe we don't all remember that.

But I remember having a school that was 70 per cent full. And I remember the day — and I remember this so clearly — that I walked into the Centennial Auditorium, as it was called at that time, and I had a . . . watching the speaker from the Department of Education, Government of Saskatchewan, and he had this chart. And the chart said, here's our population, school population, 10 years ago. Here's our school population five years ago. Here's our school population today. Here's our school population in five years. Here's our school population in 10 years. That was their attitude, just straight down. I sat there

for about 38 more seconds, and I thought if that's what our leadership looks like, I'm not going to sit here and take it.

You know, it seems to me that with our population growing by 120,000 in the last seven years . . . youngest population in Canada, one of the great things about this province. And you know, we have . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And here it comes. Here it comes, great time to cut, because they're not talking about the child. They never talk about the child. That they think if you're over here, if you go to a faith-based school, that somehow a dollar we spend over there isn't a dollar educating our children. And that's, you know, it's just so hard to understand. And it is; it is shameful, and I'm a little embarrassed by that.

I am not embarrassed however by our education funding where we went from 944 million in total funding to 2.2 billion in nine and a half years. I'm not embarrassed about our operating funding that went from 1.1 or 1.41 billion to 1.86 billion, up 32 per cent.

And if I was them, I would be so embarrassed about not only closing 176 schools, but investing in capital in 2007, \$18 million. In 2016 our investment was \$119 million, 40 schools, \$119 million, 40 new schools, 25 major renovations in schools, and created the prevented maintenance. We have so much to be proud of. And I'm going to be supporting this bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and a pleasure to enter this debate. I think it's a very important one and one that people in the province are watching closely.

And I want to thank my colleagues for being clear about our position and being very concerned about the antics over there, the bit of a circus, because unfortunately our kids are not seeing the commitment they should be seeing from this government. And you know, all those members over there . . . In fact I asked a minister the other day about how much our last budget was. It was 8 billion; now it's 14 billion. And they can't . . . They seem to even have to attack our kids more with this \$60 million tax cut.

You know we have the Minister of Education who says he doesn't want to see that money go to the boardroom or the courtroom but in the classroom. We can all agree with that. But except they're sending \$60 million to the corporate boardroom. Why don't you take that money that you're sending from the corporate boardroom back into the classroom? And that's the issue that parents are worried about, that were on the steps of the legislature yesterday, of which I saw none of those folks out yesterday at that discussion.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was a teacher in rural Saskatchewan in the 1980s, and the member from Meadow Lake would know this, would know this school that I taught in in Makwa. He would know that school well, and he would know the high school was closed under the Conservative government. He knows that for a fact. He knows that for a fact. Over there these guys are reconstructing the history, and I

understand the previous speaker was talking about his role as a board Chair. If he truly was a board Chair, he knew, he would know. He was the one who closed those schools. It was his responsibility because that's a local responsibility. That's the case. That's the truth, Mr. Speaker.

But I have to say this. I have to say this. Sometimes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have tells that really predict our future behaviour, things that we do that really speak to our commitment to spirituality and family values and all of that kind of thing. Those are things that we see when we look at people and say, doesn't look like they're really telling us the truth. They're not really speaking to us in our eyes. So we really have to wonder what's happening behind the scenes.

We see two examples, two examples in this budget where I wonder about the commitment to spirituality and family values. And of course the first one, and we had questions today about cutting the spiritual care of those who are in need in our hospitals. How can this government on one hand stand up today and talk about what they're talking about and on the other hand slash that budget, slash that budget? And then the other one clearly is for those people who are on social assistance. The most vulnerable people in our province are having their funerals cut as of July 1st. Now it's just not the Protestants. It's all people. It's the First Nations people, people of different faiths, who will not be able to access that to say goodbye to their loved ones in a respectful, dignified manner. So that's just a little predictor of what their feelings are today and what it will be in the future.

But I have one that, you know, when we were preparing for this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and you will remember this. The current Minister of Education who also was and is the Minister of Labour, 2012, he introduced some amendments to *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*, created the employment Act. One of the things he did was he eliminated the reference to Sunday, which is interesting because the government on the side of that day said, well we want to be like the rest of Canada. We don't want to recognize our unique characteristics here in Saskatchewan. We want to be like everybody else. So they got rid of any reference to Sunday when it comes to the weekend. And we tried to raise this with them over there, and of course they said, "Not an issue. People don't really care." But today, it's all of a sudden a big issue.

But this is the letter I wrote to the Most Reverend Daniel Bohan on September 21st, 2013:

Dear Most Reverend Bohan,

I read with interest the article in Saturday's *Leader-Post* regarding your pastoral letter that was distributed in Regina's Catholic churches today. I want to say that I applaud your thoughtful reflections on the new challenges that *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* unfortunately creates.

Specifically, I appreciated your comments about Sunday. The removal of the reference to Sunday in the new legislation creates an unjust vulnerability that unfortunately many workers and their families may now have to face in Saskatchewan.

Once again, thank you for your leadership as shown in your pastoral letter on work and worship. It's important that we continually be, as you suggest, in the service of the common good for our people.

Fortunately, the pressure from the spiritual groups led to the reinstatement of Sunday into the regulations. So people do have a force for good in this thing.

But I do have to tell you that I was amazed that this government could do such an action. And I'm amazed when we passed that budget that did in funerals for those who are most vulnerable in Saskatchewan; that they did in spiritual care in the province. I couldn't believe it.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue. But these folks, I have to say and the Premier has said, the Premier has said, the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. And these are the kind of things that they do.

The Deputy Speaker: — It now being 1 o'clock, the normal time of adjournment, this House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

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