



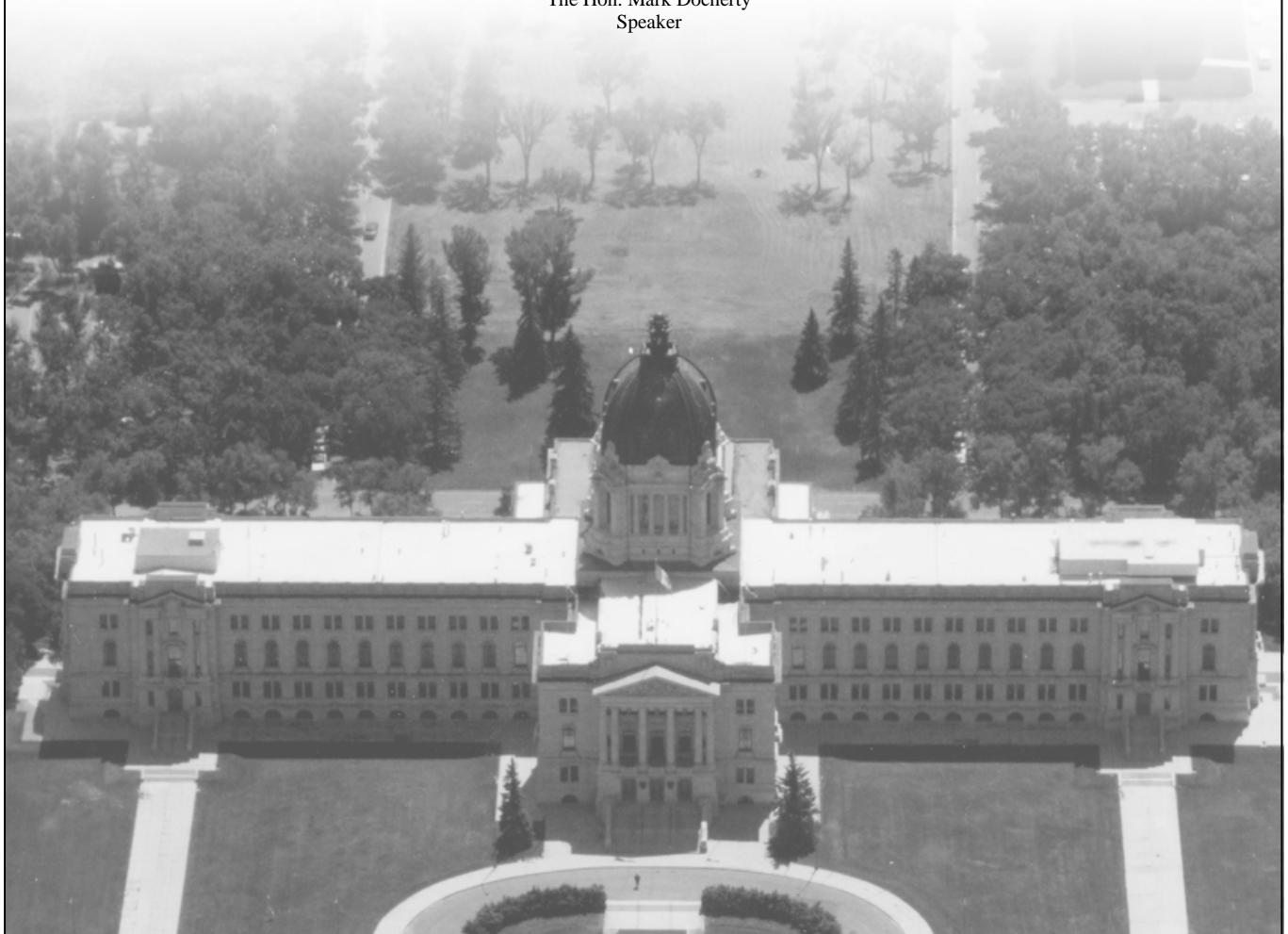
SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)
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The Hon. Mark Docherty
Speaker



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2nd Session — 28th Legislature

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Leader of the Opposition — Ryan Meili

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

The Speaker: — Before routine proceedings, I ask that all members please rise to observe a moment of silence in honour of those involved in the Humboldt Broncos bus tragedy.

[The Assembly observed a moment of silence.]

The Speaker: — Thank you. Why is the Premier on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I would ask leave to make a statement.

The Speaker: — The Premier has asked for leave. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. I recognize the Premier.

CONDOLENCE MOTION

Humboldt Broncos Bus Tragedy

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members of this Assembly for granting leave here today. I'd like to make a statement and, at the conclusion of that statement, I would like to move a motion, Mr. Speaker. And I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition that will be seconding that motion in light of the most unimaginable incident that our Humboldt Broncos, our city of Humboldt, and our province and our nation has been faced with this weekend.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. So say the scriptures, Mr. Speaker. Today in Saskatchewan, Alberta, across the country, there are many families in mourning. There are many families in need of comfort, and it's the extended family of the Humboldt Broncos that require our love and require our support the most.

Mr. Speaker, so many people — too many people — bear a heavy burden in Humboldt after Friday's terrible accident. But it is a burden that is shared by the entire province and it's a burden that is shared by our entire nation. Today we stand with the Humboldt Broncos. We stand with all of the families affected by this tragedy, and we offer our prayers and our deepest condolence on the immense loss that they have suffered.

Mr. Speaker, the events of the last few days have left us reeling — in our province, in our nation, and around the world. This accident was shocking and it resonates so deeply with so many. It's so easy for us to relate to these young men that were on that bus because many of us have been there. If you participate in sports in this province, long bus rides come with the territory. It's been said that riding the bus is a Prairie rite of passage in our province. It's part of growing up. It's part of what we do.

And it's not just in sports. How many in this Assembly rode the

bus to school? I did. How many of us have children or grandchildren who rode the bus to school today? Many of us. In hockey, the bus, it's just sort of a locker room on wheels. It's your second home. It's a place where you bond with your teammates, your classmates. It's a place where you have fun. It's a place where so many memories are made.

Today it is terrible to contemplate that moment when the comfortable, happy environment of the Humboldt Broncos bus, team bus, was shattered. And I think Mike Babcock said it best when he said, "it rips the heart right out of your chest."

Mr. Speaker, the word unimaginable has been used frequently to describe this incident, although barely appropriate, because it's difficult to comprehend what our families are going through right now — the families of the players, coaches, officials who perished, the families of those who cling to life at this very moment, the families of those who suffered serious injuries and will need years to recover and in some cases will not recover fully.

But, Mr. Speaker, imagine we must. Empathy is more than an expression of kind words. Empathy implores us to put ourselves in the place of those that have been so affected by this tragedy so that we can better understand their pain and their despair. We're called upon to imagine what it would be like if it was our son, our grandson, our brother, our nephew, if it was one of them that was suddenly gone. We might acknowledge that this is a latent fear for many of us as we go about our daily lives, but this is how we all relate to this unimaginable incident.

Mr. Speaker, when you become a parent, there is tremendous joy. I've experienced that joy twice. When you hold your baby in your hands, so small and so helpless, the happiness, it's almost indescribable. You know then, if you didn't know it before, that life is oh so fragile. You worry as your baby grows into a young adult. The concern that you have as a parent, it starts to diminish, but it doesn't go away completely. It never does. Because that young adult will always be your child. They'll always be your baby. But at some point you need to let go. At some point you have to trust them. You have to trust them because they're your children, that they will make enough good choices along the way to survive and to succeed in their life. You have to trust in the people and the institutions that influence your children.

The parents of young men playing on the Humboldt Broncos trusted the team. They trusted the Humboldt Broncos for good reason. The Humboldt Broncos are a first-class organization. This team operates in a strong, caring community, and no time has that been more evident than recently. They play in a league, the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League, with a long, storied history, a league that is professionally managed and professionally ran.

Mr. Speaker, those families believed their sons would be safe. But, Mr. Speaker, in this life, there are things that are beyond our control. In this life, there is a cruel randomness that defies good intentions; at times, it defies meticulous planning. A terrible accident occurred and we are left to imagine what it could be like to lose a child, to lose a husband, a father, or someone that is so close to us.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan, we can imagine. In Saskatchewan we do feel the pain and despair — our neighbours' — and we feel the need to be compelled to act. That's the way it is in a small town, and Saskatchewan is a small town at heart. In times of crisis, we have each other's back. We always have. When the situation is serious, in this province, we mobilize. We never hesitate. We are always there for one another.

Mr. Speaker, you saw this after the accident Friday evening. The courageous first responders — the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police], EMTs [emergency medical technician], the paramedics, STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society], our provincial air ambulance, all of the volunteers that came upon this horrific accident — heedless of the danger, they desperately worked to save lives. We are grateful. We are ever so grateful for the commitment and professionalism of each of those individuals and all of our first responders in this province, the medical teams in Nipawin, in Tisdale, and in Saskatoon.

Dr. Masri was in Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon when the code orange was sounded. He wrote about what he saw on Facebook, Mr. Speaker. The passion, care, and love of the nurses in emergency and the intensive care unit. The physicians who came from everywhere to help. The respiratory therapists who Dr. Masri described as overlooked, silent heroes. The residents who stepped up to the challenge. The social workers who provided supports. I quote, Mr. Speaker, "May this be my first and final code orange," Dr. Masri wrote to his colleagues on Facebook. "I never want to see what I saw again."

What an honour to know that you have all helped save such a large number of lives. Mr. Speaker, what an honour it is for all of us in this Assembly to represent such special people in our province. It's humbling. It's humbling for me. I know it's humbling for each of you in this Assembly.

We owe these people and others our deepest and everlasting gratitude. In Humboldt we witnessed the strength of Broncos President Kevin Garinger, who stood tall during the very worst, the absolute worst of circumstances, and Mayor Rob Muench, who said there was no playbook on how to handle a crisis like this, but then he led an effort that was so effective that it seemed to me that he may have had a playbook, Mr. Speaker. It seemed to me that he had plans drawn up already with the efficiency that he led this effort.

We in this Assembly and across this province are so very thankful for the leadership in Humboldt at every level: the Broncos management, the city council, the businesses who've contributed and contributed mightily, the faith community who came together to offer comfort and organize last night's vigil that I know a number of members of this Legislative Assembly on both sides attended, the schools who in the days ahead will offer counselling for students across this province.

Mr. Speaker, Humboldt has been challenged like few communities have ever been challenged in this province or in this nation of Canada. And Humboldt is meeting that challenge because, as the Finance minister and the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Humboldt can tell you, the whole world has seen in the last three days that Humboldt is so strong.

Humboldt has the backing of this province, Mr. Speaker. The response has been incredible from individuals across Saskatchewan. From La Ronge to Lafleche, support is pouring in — financial support, material support, spiritual support, Mr. Speaker, which is so important — from all corners of Saskatchewan.

And the reaction on the national level has been no less astounding. Mr. Speaker, I want to express my gratitude to the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, for his immediate expression of support and for attending the vigil in Humboldt last evening. The Prime Minister's presence in the community means so much.

[13:45]

I want to thank fellow premiers from across the nation that have reached out. And today in many provinces across this nation flags are at half-mast, and I thank them for that. We are grateful to all of those who have contributed to the GoFundMe page, and in other ways, but to the GoFundMe page that has raised now more than \$5 million and still counting. Mr. Speaker, there's more than 60,000 donations to that page from over 60 countries. It includes a donation from a seven-year-old hockey player who gave the money that he received from the tooth fairy. That little boy wanted to help the Broncos, like so many others in this province and in this nation and in this world.

Mr. Speaker, what can you say about the response of the hockey community? Like Saskatchewan, like our province, like our communities, the hockey community is close. It's tightly knit, and it understands precisely what Humboldt is going through. As Connor McDavid said, and I quote, "Everyone has been on that bus before."

The tributes across North America and around the world have sent a clear message: Humboldt is not alone in dealing with this tragedy. The thoughts and prayers from around this world are with you.

Mr. Speaker, our government stands with Humboldt in this very dark hour. Families directly affected by the accident in the weeks ahead will need counselling. So will first responders, health care professionals, students, friends, not just in Humboldt, but in other communities across this province. That counselling will be provided, Mr. Speaker.

And if the health care system needs additional supports to care for the injured, Mr. Speaker, that support will be forthcoming. If the city of Humboldt needs more help, this province will be there for that city — our city. We will do what it takes to ensure that Humboldt, the Humboldt Broncos, and the families involved can begin to heal. And we know, Mr. Speaker, that this recovery process is going to take some time. Life will never be the same for families affected.

As it was put last night, Mr. Speaker, by the team chaplain, the wounds are many and the pain is overwhelming. But we have hope, and over time wounds will turn to scars. And though the scars will remain and will be part of who we are, over time the pain will not be quite so raw. Our Good Shepherd was also wounded, and our Good Shepherd also bears scars. Though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he is with us

and he understands our grief.

Mr. Speaker, in time, light will penetrate this darkness. In fact in some ways it already has. Bronco defenceman Logan Boulet died in that crash Friday evening, but just a few weeks ago, just a few weeks prior, when he turned 21, Logan signed an organ donor card. And, Mr. Speaker, six people will live because Logan took the time to sign that card. His girlfriend, McKailyn Ives, called Logan a hero. She called him a hero on Facebook, and I believe McKailyn is right. She wrote, and I quote:

I am so grateful that he chose me to be such a special part of his life. I love you deeply and I will always cherish the memories you gave me. I am so proud to be your girlfriend and I am so proud of you.

Mr. Speaker, all of us are so proud of Logan.

This is our team, the Humboldt Broncos. This is our community, Mr. Speaker, the city of Humboldt — compassionate, tough, resilient, and united. These are our families. These are the families that we reach out to. These are the families that we embrace. These are the families that we uplift. These are the families that we support. Together we will get through this. Together we will persevere. Together we are Humboldt strong.

God bless the province of Saskatchewan, and God bless Humboldt, and God bless the Humboldt Broncos.

Mr. Speaker, by leave of this Assembly I want to move the following motion:

That the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan express its deepest sympathies and condolences to the friends and families of:

Adam Herold, 16 years old, from Montmartre, Saskatchewan
 Conner Lukan, 21, from Slave Lake, Alberta
 Evan Thomas, 18, from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
 Jacob Leicht, 19 years old, from Humboldt, Saskatchewan
 Jaxon Joseph, 20 years old, from Edmonton, Alberta
 Logan Boulet, 21, from Lethbridge, Alberta
 Logan Hunter, 18, from St. Albert, Alberta
 Logan Schatz, 20, from Allan, Saskatchewan
 Stephen Wack, 21, from St. Albert, Alberta
 Parker Tobin, 18, from Stony Plain, Alberta
 Brody Hinz, 18, from Humboldt, Saskatchewan
 Darcy Haugan, 42, from Humboldt, Saskatchewan
 Glen Doerksen, 59, from Carrot River, Saskatchewan
 Mark Cross, 27, from Strasbourg, Saskatchewan
 Tyler Bieber, 29, from Humboldt, Saskatchewan; and

In so doing, express its support for their families and communities in Saskatchewan and Alberta, the Humboldt Broncos junior hockey club, the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League, and the entire province of Saskatchewan as they cope with this tragic loss; and further

That the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan express its profound gratitude for the courage and professionalism of the Saskatchewan first responders, the RCMP, and many

medical professionals whose commitment and determination in the face of such a horrific tragedy was a light in the darkness and shall never be forgotten.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Premier by leave:

That the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan express its deepest sympathies and condolences to the friends and families of:

Adam Herold, 16 years old, from Montmartre, Saskatchewan
 Conner Lukan, 21, from Slave Lake, Alberta
 Evan Thomas, 18, from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
 Jacob Leicht, 19, from Humboldt, Saskatchewan
 Jaxon Joseph, 20, from Edmonton, Alberta
 Logan Boulet, 21, from Lethbridge, Alberta
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 Logan Schatz, 20, from Allan, Saskatchewan
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In so doing, express its support for their families and communities in Saskatchewan and Alberta, the Humboldt Broncos junior hockey club, the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League, and the entire province of Saskatchewan as they cope with this tragic loss; and further

That the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan express its profound gratitude for the courage and professionalism of the Saskatchewan first responders, RCMP, and many medical professionals whose commitment and determination in the face of such horrific tragedy was a light in the darkness and shall never be forgotten.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. “I don’t want to be here. I don’t want to be here, but I’m glad we are.” Those are the words that Pastor Sean Brandow, the chaplain of the Humboldt Broncos, used to start off his words at last night’s vigil in Humboldt where hundreds, over a thousand people were gathered together, coming together to share in their grief. And I felt that that summed up so well how we all were feeling. Nobody would want to see an event of this magnitude, any such tragedy. But when one happens, what we would want is to be together, to be able to come together and share in our grief, in our sorrow. To come together in prayer and in community.

One of the people that I was watching yesterday during that very beautiful ceremony was a colleague of mine, Dr. Paul Labelle. He was my teacher in medical school. Not to make anything special; we all have a connection here. This is Saskatchewan. There’s no six degrees of separation here. There’s one or two. We all can find a connection with each

other in almost no time at all.

But his story particularly struck me because he told the *StarPhoenix* about how he had come upon the accident. And he's an emergency physician and his initial response was, I want to rush out; I want to help. Of course his son was among those on the bus, and he needed to let those who weren't so involved take care of that situation. But just that emotion, you know, to feel that moment — the fear, the anguish, the confusion, the pain. And the frustration, the helplessness of having all of these skills and this knowledge and wanting to help but knowing that you couldn't, how hard that would be.

And I think a bit about our work here. You know, we have at our disposal so much knowledge, so much capacity. Our job is to help people improve their lives, to help people be healthier. And there's so much that we can do. We have so much influence on the well-being of the province. And yet there are also so many things we can do nothing to prevent and nothing, as much as we'd like nothing more, nothing to undo.

And as I think about the way that we are all feeling with the people of this province, that grief and that sense of frustration, of wishing we could do more, 15 lives are lost. Fifteen families are directly affected, are hurting so much, are hit the hardest.

But this is hitting us all so hard. And we all, as the Premier pointed out, have that connection to the road. We all live in this big province. So much space between us. Whether it's for hockey or football or band or dance or cadets, kids are out on the road. For school, for work, for appointments, just visiting family. We spend so much time on the highways across this province, and we all know the joys of that travel and the joys of the way that connects us, and also the worries and the fear that is associated. These events just make . . . Our worst fears have come true.

Mr. Speaker, I want to join with the members on this side, the members in this Assembly, the people of Saskatchewan, people around the world who are bringing their condolences to the families, the friends of the hockey players and those who work with them, of the Humboldt Broncos. We want to bring our condolences to Humboldt and to the Broncos organization, to all the communities that are affected. A special condolence to the Minister of Finance, the member for Humboldt; and the member for Carrot River. Now these are . . . It's close to home for all of us but it's at home for these members, and that hits even more.

[14:00]

We want also to extend our thanks, to join in extending our thanks to the first responders, the RCMP, the health care providers who worked through the night and continue to work, the community leaders, the clergy, everyone who's had that initial response and continues to support with everything they can. We want to thank the House leaders and the Premier for allowing us to dedicate today to this, to put aside the regular business and focus on what really matters, focus on what really matters.

There was a picture that was shared widely on social media. One of the fathers of one of the young men who was involved

in the accident posted a picture of his son and two other boys in their gowns in their hospital beds, these tough young hockey players, reaching out, holding hands. And that to me symbolized so much of what we're all going through. Every one of us is wounded. Every one of us is grieving, and we're reaching out to each other for strength and support.

Last night at the vigil, Minister Brenda Curtis from Humboldt asked us to do the same. We all joined hands, whether we knew the person next to us or whether it was a perfect stranger. The entire hockey arena and curling arena and school — everybody joined hands and reached out. And that gesture, that gesture of coming together is a gesture that will be repeated very much in the coming days as we all reach out to each other to try to understand, try to comprehend, try to support one another, come together.

And it is in that spirit that I wholeheartedly add my support to the motion that has been put forward, because it is together that we will be Humboldt strong, that we will be Saskatchewan strong. Thank you.

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's with heavy hearts today we talk about the Humboldt Broncos. You know, this has affected all of Saskatchewan. It's affected the whole country. And our condolences, our thoughts and prayers go to the 15 dead, the 14 injured, and the countless lives changed forever.

Mr. Speaker, the bus driver, Glen Doerksen, was from Carrot River. He leaves behind his wife Karen, his son Cameron, and his daughter Melissa. His son Cameron was getting married this summer, and Glen won't get to see that.

Mr. Speaker, Glen always had a smile on his face. I think it was even said in the paper that he always had a smile on his face, and he did. You know, he was quite the character, and he loved his sports. It was said when he was on the golf course, he could be heard three holes away when he made a good shot.

He also was involved in the community. He was a lineman in six-man football, a ref in hockey. He coached basketball. He was a lineman in volleyball. Just a great community person who's going to be missed at all.

And he was a professional in his driving skills, Mr. Speaker. I know that for a fact. He drove semi, he drove bus, and he loved driving bus for the players.

Mr. Speaker, throughout this tragedy I want to give credit to the RCMP, to our fire departments, first responders, physicians, nurses, STARS, the air ambulance, Social Services, and all the local people who came together in this trying time. This, this is Saskatchewan.

I don't know what more to say, Mr. Speaker. The whole country is grieving, and for some it will never pass. Thank you.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Where to start and what to say. These are very difficult remarks to make, but I'm on my feet today because I want the community of Humboldt, the families and the friends of all those who were on that bus, all those who were touched by this tragedy, to know that we share in your grief, that you are not alone.

I didn't grow up in a community like Humboldt where the hockey team, and by extension its players, these young men, are the heart of the community. But I did grow up in a hockey family, watching my big brothers, Marc and Dave, play for teams like the Blazers, the Contacts, the Blades, and the Huskies.

I think my story is the story of so many people in this province. I have such fond memories of my time spent at the old arena downtown, The Barn, and the Rutherford Rink. I still remember the railroad trip to watch my brothers and their teammates square off against teams like the Notre Dame Hounds or the family trip we took to Billings, Montana to watch my brother Marc play there. In fact my first trip ever to Regina, when I was about 10 or 11, was to watch Marc play against the Pats when he played for the New Westminster Bruins.

I remember the great pride I had in having brothers on these teams, community celebrities of sorts. I remember going to fan breakfasts actually at Eaton's to have my picture taken with the Blades. Please don't tell my brothers, but I was usually more excited to get my picture taken with the other players, anyone but them. I think I still have, in my childhood memento box, pictures of the Blades hockey cards that I collected.

I know I'm not alone in this pride and excitement to know these young men. Doyle Fox, who works in our caucus office, spent a brief time playing for the Humboldt Broncos and he shared with me how great it was to be in that community, to simply be in the coffee shop and have folks come up and connect with you because you were a Bronco, a member of the team, a member of the lifeblood of the community.

I remember so vividly my parents opening up their home to other young men who had left their families and their own communities to pursue their hockey dreams in Saskatoon. It was wonderful to be part of a billet family, to get to know these players. And I can still picture my parents glued to the radio to listen to play-by-play commentary for away games. Hockey was a central part of my young life and our house, as it is still today for so many in Saskatchewan, as it is for the people of Humboldt.

I also had the privilege of travelling myself as an athlete on buses, in vans, and on planes across this province and across this country with my teammates. It was such a thrill to have that independence from your family and to head out on road trips with your fellow athletes with whom you've trained so hard and built such a strong bond. I especially loved the nights on the bus after a tournament, eating McDonald's or whatever food was available, catching up, dozing off, laughing, rehashing the events of the day or the previous days. I'm sure my parents were always worried when one of their kids ventured out on trips like this, but I didn't think once of the possible dangers when I was a teenager. I certainly do, as a mom myself today, when my own kids are not with me.

We always want our children to be safe, but we do want them to venture out in the world, have opportunities, and grow into the people that they're meant to be becoming, just like these young men were doing. Admittedly I am less personally connected to hockey these days than I once was, but I'm not completely distanced from this world. I still think of myself coming from that hockey family, with my brothers now coaching teams or having coached teams like the Blazers, the Contacts, and the Stallions, and running a hockey academy, brothers who are mourning the loss of and the devastating trauma to players they have known and coached.

I have nephews who still play hockey, my brothers' sons who knew and know some of these Broncos. I have parents today who are no longer glued to their radio but this time to their computer and the live stream from San Jose to listen to their grandson on the ice. Hockey still plays a big part of my family's life, just like it does for so many people here in Saskatchewan, like the people of Humboldt.

Although I'm not directly connected to any of the Humboldt Broncos team personnel or families, like so many in our province my heart broke on Friday night when the devastating news of the crash emerged. I ache as a mom, a sister, a billet sister, an auntie, a member of this community of connections that we call Saskatchewan.

To the folks of Humboldt, to the families and friends of these players and team personnel who have lost so much, to all who have been touched by this horrible tragedy, including first responders and medical and support professionals, it is a long road ahead. As you're on this journey of grief and healing, please just know you are not alone.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my constituency starts about 10 miles north of Humboldt. A lot of people in my hometown of Middle Lake have forever carried season tickets to the Humboldt Broncos. I now stand and speak for them.

In rural Saskatchewan, hockey is a mainstay of the winter of our long Saskatchewan. The depths of the sorrow that has swept across Saskatchewan is like a heavy, dark fog. It's unbelievable. The pain of the loss has touched every community in Saskatchewan — I should even say Western Canada. Now in our hearts they are all Saskatchewan boys.

We must help each other through this painful time. We must pray, each one of us in our own way, for the Humboldt Broncos. We must pray for the friends and family that have had their lives forever changed. At Remembrance Day we all say, we will remember them. I would ask that you all now say it with me: we will remember them. God bless us all in our hour of need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I rise to put words to loss and pain that's beyond words. As such, my words will be brief and, I can assure you, inadequate to describe indescribable pain and loss that so many within our province are facing — the loss that the

families of those on the bus are facing here today, the rooms furnished with a life of memories and keepsakes that are empty, to the teammates with empty stalls within the locker rooms beside them, to that incredible organization and the coaches and the community and all that wrap their care around those players and that team, and of course to a community with a broken heart.

We stood yesterday together with thousands in solemn solidarity at the Elgar Petersen Arena, an astonishing display of love and prayer for families and for young people that have been hurt in ways that can't be described. For a team, for a community that lives and breathes and eats hockey, for a province certainly that's shaken and in mourning here right now, I want to extend our care to all those — our prayers, our love to all those that have been affected, some so deeply.

I want to extend our thanks to all those that have responded in such a special way — the first responders, the RCMP, the health care workers, those providing mental health care support right now, the trauma teams, the leadership of the organization, the leadership of the SJHL [Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League], the leadership in the incredible hockey community here within Saskatchewan, right across the country and around the world.

So we stand here today in solemn solidarity. I would highlight Adam Herold who captained and led the Regina Pat Canadians, an incredible young defenceman described as an incredible leader, born and raised in Montmartre. Just like all those others whose lives were lost on the bus that night, a tremendous loss to our province and our world. So I simply stand together with my colleagues, of those across our province and our country, to mourn. And as we stand together with love and prayers and support and understanding, let us be reminded and let us work to all be Humboldt strong.

[14:15]

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to join with colleagues to add my voice of support and condolence to the families, players, to the city of Humboldt, and all those involved.

I was out of province when I heard the news of the tragic events of last Friday night. I was in Winnipeg where I had an opportunity to see the outpouring of support from outside of our borders. I attended the Winnipeg Jets-Chicago Blackhawks hockey game where a magnificent tribute took place nearly hours after the tragic event. The national anthems were sung with the players at centre ice interspersed with each other — one Jet, one Blackhawk, and the referees as well — standing in a circle. The chants of "Go Broncos Go." It wasn't about the game. It was about what hockey meant, what life meant to each and every individual. The game was televised across the country and each and every player had their name bar removed and the name Broncos for both teams put on.

The Winnipeg Jets' public address announcer, in his now famous address, said hockey players, sporting figures, talk

about not playing for the name on the back, but playing for the crest on the front of the team and part of a team. He said tonight it'll be different, that each and every player on the ice will be playing for the name on the back of their jerseys, the Broncos.

The 50/50 was a record number that was donated to the Broncos. And it was just one of many of those tributes that took place outside of our borders, and for that we say thank you to our sister provinces, to each and every province, to jurisdictions indeed around North America and around the world.

As I drove home, I had a chance to listen to some of the coaches and the players and the people that talked about the game and talked indeed about the tragedy. The Jets coach, Paul Maurice, talked about being on a bus as all of us here have memories of doing that. But he talked about the bus being a sanctuary, about the families, you know, looking at the bus driving away and breathing a sigh of relief and saying, yes, my family is safe. My son or daughter are safe. But certainly that wasn't to be the case.

The Jets captain, Blake Wheeler, he talked . . . You know, they asked him, how did you, as players and an organization, pull something together so, so very quickly? And he just said, because each and every one of us have been there. Each and every one of the players could relate to being on one of those buses and knowing that, yes, it could've been them. The Premier mentioned Mike Babcock and his eloquence and the grief that he certainly enunciated. Todd McLellan and Glen Gulutzan from the Edmonton Oilers and the Calgary Flames, they immediately came to Saskatoon to be in the hospital with those and to offer their thoughts and prayers.

As I drove home, people called in from California, from Atlanta. They talked of a game that took place in Norway where there was a moment of silence, so indeed it is a worldwide phenomenon. The hockey community, the sporting community, and all that's good about sports came together in that evening.

I had an opportunity to attend the vigil in Humboldt last night, and it was comforting to see so many members there from both sides of the House: the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition and members and MPs [Member of Parliament] and, you know, community leaders. And I know it meant a great deal because people came up and said how much it meant to them to have the Prime Minister there, to have, you know, other hockey figures like Don Cherry and Ron MacLean and Drew Remenda. It was very special.

And last night was very special. As I left the house and drove from Saskatoon to Humboldt, to see along the way, and those of you who followed that same path will know — the farmyards, the signs, the "Broncos Strong," the "Go Broncos Go" signs on the highway as we approached Humboldt.

I drove out there with my son and we had an hour to talk about things, to talk about what this meant. And I asked him, you know, what did he do when he first heard the news? And I was very, very happy to hear his words. He said he and his girlfriend and others, they immediately went and gave blood. And you know, that's very, very special. And they talked about organ donation as well. And we've talked about it in this House and the challenges and all that, but this is where you really see how

special that is.

Yesterday at the ceremony, one of the most special moments was when we were all drawn to the attention of the clock, and it was 7:32 p.m. And that was when the game was supposed to be played but something much different was happening. And the names of those who perished were read and we all watched those families, one after one, express their sorrow and their grief. And one of those families are constituents of Saskatoon Willowgrove, the Labelle family, and they've been through a tremendous, a tremendous . . . time over the last three days. So to that family and to all families, you know, we just want to express our deep sorrow and deep regret.

The analogy of the scar has been said here today. That really stuck with me as I was driving back to Regina yesterday. Kevin Garinger, the team president, said, "Pray for Humboldt today and every day forward. We are all Humboldt Broncos fans." And as Helen Keller said, "The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart." Our hearts will never forget Friday, April 6th in Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When I heard the news, my immediate response was, this was a tough one. And that was the same response that I had for the La Loche shooting. And I can say to the people of Saskatchewan and Humboldt that at that shooting, Saskatchewan and Humboldt prayed for us; we now pray for them. From the furthest northern community of Camsell Portage, people in the North are praying for the people of Saskatchewan and of Humboldt.

I pay tribute today to the many people that travel on our roads to attend competitions. In northern Saskatchewan, we also face that challenge. Bus drivers and the team personnel, coaches, and all the athletes that represent us and represent our communities are in God's hands as they ride those buses. We must continue praying for all those buses and all those children and athletes that will continue travelling our roads.

Like me, my children rode those buses from northern Saskatchewan and rode many great miles as friends and as colleagues. My grandchildren now ride those buses, and all we can do is hope and pray that the toughest, worst nightmares that happened in Humboldt will never happen again.

It's very important to note that when La Loche had their shooting, I couldn't provide the strength of leadership that I saw from the people of Humboldt. The prayers for the victims, the survivors, and the family was felt by many, but the leadership — in particular Mayor Muench and his council, the SJHL, Humboldt Bronco organization, and the spiritual leaders — provided great strength at the vigil. My daughter and I sat and prayed amongst the people in St. Augustine Church, and we felt the compassion and strength of the community of Humboldt. We saw the inspiration from the fire departments and the RCMP, from the health care professionals, and the first responders with their compassion and their care.

Mr. Speaker, there's no question that families are suffering, but I can tell you from our own tragic event a number of years ago,

prayers do indeed help. They're so important for people to continue those prayers. As I mentioned, we asked for prayers then; we got the prayers and we got the strength. Our people, our northern people now pray for Humboldt and all the families that were devastated by this news and impacted by this accident.

In closing, I asked an older lady one day after she lost one of her young sons. She lost quite a few of her siblings, as our family did, through accidents. We lost three. She lost four or five. And I asked her one day at one of the funerals of her children, how did she continue keeping her faith? As she sat there and prayed, she told me that "I leave it up to him. He will decide. Perhaps one day he will explain to me why this happens, but right now I have faith. I leave it in his hands. Sometimes that faith is shaken, but I leave it in his hands because if it is my choice I would never choose any on my own," is what she said.

So to the people of Humboldt, you are not alone. Let us not lose that faith. Let us not deny the tears. Let us not forget. And let us continue being Broncos forever, and being Humboldt strong. Thank you.

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

Mr. Steinley: — And on the ninth day, God looked down at his frozen tundra and said, "I need a skater." So God made a hockey player.

God said, "I need somebody who will get up before dawn, take 15 minutes getting dressed, spend two hours on the ice, take 15 minutes getting undressed, go home and eat breakfast, and then stay up past midnight skating on his frozen pond." So God made a hockey player.

God said, "I need somebody strong enough to tussle with the enemy, yet sportsman enough to shake his hand when it's over. Somebody not afraid to lose, but with enough heart to despise not winning." So God made a hockey player.

God said, "I need somebody who can take a hard pass, stickhandle to the backhand, spin away from a hit, go back to the forehand, and wrist a shot to the net, all while gliding with grace and with speed on a pair of steel blades. Somebody who watches a shot ring off the post, only to look up at the sky and say with a smile, maybe next time." So God made a hockey player.

God needed somebody to stand in front of a rush of sticks and skates, take more than a hundred shots at practice, ice the bruises that show, rub the ones that don't, suit back up and do it all over again, just so his teammates can get better. So God made a hockey player.

God said, "I need somebody with enough desire to never quit, enough passion to never be good enough, and with enough grit to take a hard piece of frozen rubber moving 90 miles an hour to the cheekbone, take two minutes to catch his breath while the cut's closed with stitches, slap his stick against his skates, jump right back on the ice, only missing one shift." So God made a hockey player.

God said, “I need an athlete, a warrior, an unselfish, ever-learning, hard-working, strong-willed, sharp-eyed, quick-witted, on-the-move thinking machine that is human enough to look around him, pause in the moment, and be bold enough and proud enough to call his team his family.” So God made a hockey player.

We hear so many times there are no words to express how we truly feel. There are no words to express our condolences and sympathies to the family, friends, and community of our Humboldt Broncos. What happened Friday on a highway in our province was an unspeakable tragedy. The players had ridden that route countless times. They were all getting ready for the game. It was the playoffs, the pivotal game five, and they were ready.

[14:30]

The boys were going over the game plan, talking about maybe getting someone back from Nipawin who maybe had an unnoticed slash or cross-check on them the game before. Because that’s what happens on the bus. The boys talk. They get to know each other better than they know their brothers and sisters. And it’s where a team of players from all different places become a family.

Over the weekend I saw a video from Ron MacLean, and his words stuck with me. He was standing in front of the Winkler Junior A team bus and he said:

This bus? This bus you can’t purchase a ticket to ride on. The only way you get here and ride on this bus is you earn it. The bus is a symbol of hard work, dedication, and love. The hard work is the hours and hours skating, working on your shot, either out at outdoor rinks or at the local arena. When everyone else has gone home, you’re still there. You’re still there ringing pucks off the posts, passing the puck off the board to yourself, preparing for scoring that game seven overtime goal to win the series and maybe a championship.

The dedication? The dedication is what you show your teammates when you spend time in the gym instead of going to watch a movie with friends or just hanging out with friends.

The love? The love of the game. Every time you hit the ice, you fall in love again; the love of your parents and family who have laughed with you, celebrated with you in your achievements, and have been there for your losses.

There is no love like the love of a hockey mom. Today more than any other day, I’m thinking about the love of hockey moms; they would have a lot. A lot of hockey moms and billet moms, moms of current players or future little stars, biological moms and billet moms, they all love their superstars the same, each and every one of them. This is from a billet mom:

Last night while I was trying to sleep,
my son’s voice I did hear,
I opened my eyes and looked around,
but he did not appear.
He said, “Mom, you’ve got to listen.

You’ve got to understand,
God didn’t take me from you, Mom.
He only took my hand.
When I called out in pain that morning,
the instant when I died,
He reached down and took my hand
and pulled me to his side.
He pulled me up and saved me from the misery and pain,
My body was hurt so badly inside
I could never be the same.
My search is really over now. I’ve found happiness within,
All the answers to my empty dreams
and all that might have been.
I love you so and miss you so, but I’ll always be nearby,
My body’s gone forever, but my spirit will never die.
And so you must go on now, live one day at a time,
Just understand, God did not take me from you.
He only took my hand.”

God bless the Humboldt Broncos.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — You know, it’s already been mentioned that words seem so inadequate at times like this. But in times like this, words are all that we have. And so I want to add a few of my own words to the community of Humboldt, the community that’s dear to my heart and my family’s, and is now dear to the entire world.

This little city, as it does every season, embraced these young men and those who work with them as their own, just like so many other communities do in this province and in this country. As the Premier has already mentioned, the whole world has now seen the strength of Humboldt, and it’s their strength in community and resiliency that to me is a microcosm of everything that is so great about this province.

And as the nation and the world turns their collective eyes and their hearts to the city of Humboldt and the entire east-central portion of this province, our thoughts and our support are with the entire community and will continue to be for a long time to come — beyond today, beyond next week, beyond next month, and beyond next year, Mr. Speaker.

As we grieve with and for the families of all who are affected, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the community of Humboldt, the citizens of Humboldt and the surrounding area for being, during a time of unbearable darkness, a collective beam of light.

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

Hon. Mr. Kaeding: — Mr. Speaker, as a parent who’s put his kids on many hockey buses and lots of sports buses and a coach of young athletes, this hits very close to home. I remember that spirit of invincibility that these young athletes have on those buses, and I hope we never lose that. I also remember the sense of family that that bus brings to everyone involved.

I’d like to add my name to the long list of condolences to all the

loved ones who've been affected by this tragedy and to the community of Humboldt. But I also want to acknowledge some of the people in the background. And I'd like to quote Tammy Kirkland, our deputy minister of Government Relations, who sent an email out to all our staff this morning. And I quote:

I want us all to recognize and be proud of the critically important role that many within our ministry, over the last few days, have played. Our emergency management and fire safety branch and our communications branch were key components of the initial response to the accident and continue to play a coordination role to ensure that families and community members receive the supports and services they need now and into the future.

Rapid responders and emergency service officers from our ministry were at the accident scene. They were assisting RCMP. They were coordinating efforts. They were responding to community members. Our emergency operations centre was activated to ensure all government ministries and agencies had up-to-date information and were deploying support services in the most responsive manner possible. And our communications folks worked with media, dignitaries, and the community so that all information needs were met and others could focus on rescue and recovery efforts.

These members of our team will not look for recognition, although they deserve it. But because they are colleagues in our midst who by virtue of their jobs and the commitment they bring to their roles have been very directly touched by this tragedy, a word of encouragement, a handshake, a thank you from you as colleagues will be a part of the safety net that we build for each other during this time.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like each of us to keep all of our emergency people in our hearts and in our prayers in all our communities throughout this province. It's an unbearable task that they bear at the unknown minute, at any time. Mr. Speaker, our provincial motto probably means more than anything it ever has before: "from many peoples, strength." Humboldt's strong. In God we trust. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to join in with my colleagues, just to say a few words. And I guess thinking about the vigil last night and the pain when we heard about the news, so many in a blink of an eye were so impacted, so much pain and hurt. And then to see the families yesterday, as some have said, their name of their loved one being called out and watching how strong they were with one another. Didn't have to be there to say anything, but just sitting there watching it, it truly was amazing, very powerful.

I think about all those that have been impacted. They're in our prayers and our thoughts. It's such a tough time but we'll be with them, and I know they know that, what we're doing here today by honouring them — those young lives, the support. I just want to say to anyone that reached out to any of the family members that have been touched and impacted so greatly . . . Some of us can't understand it. It's not our loved one. But we

have prayers. Our hearts are there for them. We're there to support them. And I want to say thank you to anyone who has reached out to any of these families to give them support, whether it's donations, a hug, a slap on the shoulder, the holding hands. Whatever it is, if it's a small gesture, it just shows how strong we are as a province and as a people.

I think about the young man back home and I think about, you know, Bryce Fiske, his mom, Tracy; I think about his dad, Kelly. The grandparents that you're close to, they're there. You watched him grow up. I just want to say to him — he's in the hospital recovering — you're in our thoughts and prayers, and I mentioned that to Tracy. And again it's in a blink of an eye, so much pain and hurt he's going to have to go through. He'll ask questions and maybe he'll ask why. Why not me? Why am I here?

To those that are suffering and recovering, again they are in our prayers. It is tough. I think about his grandparents, his siblings, and his family members and our community, and the vigil they did. I just want to say on behalf of the Cumberland constituency, our hearts and our thoughts are with those families that have been so touched and impacted. I just want to say again from my family to those families being touched, you will always be in our thoughts, our prayers. You will not be forgotten. Humboldt Broncos, the community of Humboldt, you will be in our prayers. And I say, I ask the Creator to keep Humboldt strong. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my remarks will be principally directed to those most affected by last Friday's tragedy involving the Humboldt Broncos team bus, that is the families, loved ones, and friends of the deceased, the survivors of the incident, the Humboldt Broncos hockey organization, and the community of Humboldt and surrounding areas.

I played a fair amount of hockey in my day, but that's not important. I think what I did contribute a little more was coaching young people. And I remember I never . . . I guess when the kids were younger we took some bus trips, but a lot of the travel was in private vehicles. And I remember I always, when they were getting into those vehicles, I always felt a shudder of apprehension sending them out into the Saskatchewan winters on Saskatchewan road conditions, usually, sometimes both directions in the dark, and always at least one. But we were . . . Like most rural Saskatchewan hockey travel, we didn't ever have any major incidents, and we were so fortunate.

As one of the older members in this honourable Assembly, I have naturally experienced the loss of family and close friends, and I don't think I'm very good at it or likely ever will be. But I know that when tragedy strikes in this province, we become like a giant small town and we all grieve. To those of you closest to the victims, please know that the whole province and far beyond is grieving for you and your loss, and I hope you can take strength from that.

I'm so proud of the professional players and former players and

coaches, even the president of the NHL [National Hockey League], who have voluntarily poured out their hearts to support you. We've seen NHL players with Broncos proudly displayed on the back of their jerseys where their own names would normally go. The hockey fraternity across North America understands and they are there for you, and I hope you can take strength from that.

Outside of hockey we've seen the Saskatchewan Rush and various professional baseball players sharing their support for you, and I hope you can take strength from that. The Queen and the Pope have offered heartfelt condolences, and I hope that you can take strength from that.

And what I've learned about grieving is that everybody does it differently and at a different pace. We all need to be understanding of the grieving process for those closest to the tragedy and to always be willing to talk or hold a hand or just be there for company when that's what's needed. Grieving is not a time-limited process. Our support needs to be ongoing.

[14:45]

I think the Broncos chaplain said it well last night in Humboldt when he said words to the effect that the wounds will eventually heal but the scars will remain. There are times that will always be more difficult for families, loved ones, and friends, including the survivors, like birthdays and special occasions.

I know that Saskatchewan people will always be there for you, any time that you signal that you need them. Please reach out to them when you feel that you need to, as you will in the weeks, months, and years to come.

It's rare that we are ever in total agreement in this great room where I stand and make these insignificant and inadequate and meagre remarks today, but today we truly are united in our thoughts and prayers for you, and I hope that you can take some strength from that.

I'm sure that everyone in this province who has ever prayed has said a prayer for you and for those close to you that were in that bus. God bless you and those who we all lost on Friday.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Yorkton.

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm both honoured and saddened to offer my comments to the condolence motion for the town of Humboldt and the Broncos and the families today.

Saskatchewan is hockey, Mr. Speaker, and we're all impacted. And why is that? It's because hockey isn't just a sport. It's about relationships. That's why it hits so hard.

I come from a hockey family. I was pretty much done by my midget days; I wasn't much of a hockey player. But my parents were very involved with the Weyburn Red Wings and the Yorkton Terriers, and my brother played junior and semi-pro hockey. My sons-in-law both have played junior hockey and competitive hockey. My one nephew that's currently starting his pro career is a good friend of a number of the Broncos, so it does hit very close to home.

Thursday we were joyfully celebrating the birth of a new grandson at home, and that spilled over into Friday until the news came later on Friday — a sobering reminder of how quickly life can change. The loss of any family or community member is devastating. We all know that. The loss of a young person can be even more so. It's difficult to imagine anything worse than the loss of a child. It's the wrong order of life events. Many parents lost children last week, Mr. Speaker. Some in this Assembly know that pain all too well.

As difficult as it is, I'm here to tell you that there is hope. As dark as life seems right now, over time if you allow yourself to heal, if you call on God and allow him to help you heal, the bad thoughts and memories subside and the good thoughts and memories slowly do overcome those. You will see morning light and feel joy again. But to see the morning, unfortunately, first we have to mourn, grieve. As painful as it is to grieve, we can't go under, above, around any of it. We must go through it.

But you don't need to do it alone. Many are there for you. The Lord is there for you. Part of healing is hurt and tears. I've read studies about grief and the tears associated, and scientifically tears of physical pain are different than the tears of joy, and both are very different than the tears of grief. Those tears cleanse the body of nasty stuff, Mr. Speaker, physically and emotionally, so it's healing to cry. So allow yourselves to cry.

Part of healing is forgiveness. We're going to have to learn to forgive. It's been said that life doesn't give you more than you can handle — but there's more to that statement, Mr. Speaker — with God. Life can't give you more than you can handle with him. Even if some who hear this don't believe, trust, and rely on him, I challenge you: I ask you to give it a shot. Talk to him. Ask him for help. Be angry and yell. It's okay. He's got big shoulders. He can take it.

People ask where God was in all this, and many have stated — the Broncos chaplain did an outstanding job last night — no one can answer that with total confidence. But I don't believe God causes these tragedies, Mr. Speaker, but I do know something with total confidence, that he can use all things for good. When you hear of some miraculous survival, when you hear of stories of people around the world sending their thoughts, prayers, and support, when you hear the stories of people being saved by an organ donation, when you hear of the unity of people behind those affected, when you hear of the stories of people searching for answers through faith, I know God's already at work. I pray that all are blessed by God's healing peace and comfort that surpasses all understanding. Our condolences to the families and all affected by this terrible tragedy, and as has been stated, including emergency response people, medical and mental health personnel, the clergy — remember, you're not alone.

My wife and I adopted this as our life scripture after the loss of our own son: 2 Corinthians 3 through 7 says God comforts us in our troubles so we can comfort others in their time of need, Mr. Speaker. Let us continue to comfort one another in the days, weeks, months, and years ahead. And I pray the Lord bless you and keep you, that his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance on you, and give you peace. In the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll try and be very brief. I'm sure there are 61 people in this room that could tell a story that relates to this terrible tragedy. I really wrestled whether I should stand and say anything at all, but I really felt I had to. Like so many people in Saskatchewan, this hits close to home although I didn't know any of the players directly. Having played in the SJHL and ridden the bus, having just about given your left toe to be able to get on that bus, it was, you know . . . And then you'd have to make the road trip to Prince Albert when the Raiders were in the SJHL and get kicked up there, and still be glad to get on that bus. Mr. Speaker, I had to stand and say a little bit about that, as well as a parent, and how difficult that must be for those parents.

Before I get into the bus trip a little bit and the parents, I do want to say thank you to all the health care professionals. It's been mentioned many times, but they're an amazing, an amazing group. I know one of the fellows that . . . He's a nurse that was flying on STARS that Friday afternoon, and the missions they made back and forth from the intersection of 35, Highway 335 to Saskatoon, back and forth with the victims, timing out and not getting home that night, spending the night in Saskatoon, getting home the next day and getting a call that next day on the way home to pick up another, to do another emergency case on the way from Moose Jaw — that's the type of people that we have in the caregiving industry. Again from my family's perspective, if it wasn't for the air trauma team, we would be in a different situation. So to all of those, thank you very much.

It's an amazing province, you know. We've got five WHL [Western Hockey League] teams. We've got 12 SJHL teams that travel millions of miles every winter. And that's just the WHL and the SJHL. You think of all the midget teams — and that's just hockey — and then you extrapolate that over all the other sports, and the exposure to what happened on Friday is so great, it is a miracle that we are only talking about this one tragedy.

And I know there was one a number of years ago in Swift Current. But the exposure of all of those athletes following their dream and following their passion, I don't think there would be anybody that is getting on those buses, that is taking teams, whether it's coaches or whatever, would ever give that up for the risk that they're taking because the passion that they're pursuing far outweighs any risk that they may be facing.

And so, you know, as we move forward, this tragedy has rocked the province; it's rocked the nation; it's rocked all of us. Moving forward, you know, I just hope that that passion is never stopped or interfered with with something like this. In fact I hope it makes those passions and the pursuit of those passions even greater.

I would quickly say too, to all that have reached out to the parents, you know, the parents of the 15 people that passed and the 14 that are still surviving, for all those that have reached out, I can tell you from experience, a year ago getting that phone call, how important that support is. So if you haven't reached out, please do. If you haven't got involved, somehow

get involved because it makes a world of difference.

You know, the human body is an amazing thing. It can go through a lot and it can survive. But what's even more amazing is the human spirit, and we've seen that being displayed here in Saskatchewan, across Canada, and around the world right now. Thank you.

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

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been said over and over in the past few days and again here today that there are no words to capture the sorrow and grief that the people of our province and beyond its borders are feeling and want to convey. Yet words are what we have in this place, this Assembly, so we will try our best to use our words, however inadequate.

I have not lost a child. What I can do is draw upon the loss of my sister at the age of 29. We are often reluctant to reach out to those in grief because we are afraid that we might say or do the wrong thing. Let me assure you that there is nothing to fear. I remember my in-laws driving to Regina to support me at my sister's funeral. I remember every single colleague from CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] who attended her memorial service in Saskatoon. I might not recall their words but I do recall their presence.

There was a post shared on social media this past weekend. It comes from an article written by Megan Devine titled "How To Help a Grieving Friend," and it was published on the *Huffington Post* website. Megan offers advice as a counsellor and a grief advocate.

Above all, show your love. Show up. Say something. Do something. Be willing to stand beside the gaping hole that has opened in your friend's life, without flinching or turning away. Be willing to not have any answers. Listen. Be there. Be present. Be a friend. Be love. Love is the thing that lasts.

I borrowed the words that were posted on social media by Brent Toombs from Belize, and I quote:

"Thoughts and prayers" has taken a beating lately. What used to be a well intentioned expression of support has been co-opted by people who believe an empty tweet with that phrase somehow absolves them from any and all responsibility to stop students from getting shot or from providing aid to brown people devastated by natural disasters. "Sending thoughts and prayers" and nothing else.

When the news broke of the horrific tragedy involving the Humboldt Broncos, social media blew up with "thoughts and prayers."

Thoughts and prayers. And hundreds of people gathering at the local hockey arena in the middle of a bitterly cold Saskatchewan night in order to support members of their community.

Thoughts and prayers. And coffee, donuts, and food that

always seem to magically appear whenever a group of people in Saskatchewan gather, especially in difficult times.

Thoughts and prayers. And people offering up their homes to anyone who needs a place to stay. And hotels offering free rooms.

Thoughts and prayers. And people waiting in line for 3 hours to donate blood in Saskatoon.

Thoughts and prayers. And grief counsellors dispatched to assist the families, first responders, or anyone who needs someone to talk with.

Thoughts and prayers. And Canada's two major airlines reaching out to assist affected families who need to travel to Saskatchewan.

Thoughts and prayers. And a line-up of people volunteering to get bumped off their flight so a family can get to Saskatoon sooner.

Thoughts and prayers. And parents who just lost their son in the accident keeping him on life support long enough so his organs can be used to help 6 other people.

Thoughts and prayers. And NHL coaches in tears speaking about kids they never met. And NHL teams honouring the Humboldt Broncos with on ice ceremonies and cash donations.

Thoughts and prayers. And a nation watching Hockey Night in Canada with tears in their eyes.

Thoughts and prayers. And over \$3.3 MILLION dollars (and counting) donated by 49,000 people in just 36 hours to assist the people affected by this unimaginable tragedy.

Thanks to the outpouring of support in the actions of so many, "thoughts and prayers" has value again. In Canada, especially in Saskatchewan, "thoughts and prayers" obviously never stopped meaning something much, much deeper.

[15:00]

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is often described as a relatively small tight-knit community, and that's why this tragedy hurts us and affects us all. It is because we are that tight-knit community that an amazing response has been witnessed, and we are blessed for that strong sense of community. I am so proud of this province that we call home. May our thoughts and prayers continue as long as they are needed.

There have been many thanks expressed to all those who responded and assisted in so many ways. I want to add my gratitude and that of my family, and the constituents of Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood who I represent in this place. I would also like to thank my Premier for his leadership and his strength during this very difficult time.

I want to read a message of condolence from His Holiness Pope

Francis to my bishop, His Excellency Mark Hagemoen of the Saskatoon diocese that includes the Humboldt community:

"Informed of the injury and tragic loss of life caused by the road traffic accident in the province of Saskatchewan involving young hockey players, His Holiness Pope Francis sends his condolences to those who have lost loved ones, and commends the souls of the deceased to the mercy of almighty God. To all in the community at this difficult time, Pope Francis sends his blessing."

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to share a prayer in my Catholic tradition for the dear, young men who lost their lives. "Eternal rest grant upon them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen."

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

Hon. Mr. Makowsky: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly with a heavy heart that I rise this afternoon to support the Premier's motion, the condolence motion this afternoon.

I think the Leader of the Opposition mentioned that there's just a few degrees of separation here in our great province of Saskatchewan and an event, a horrible event like this certainly reverberates. You hear over the weekend, you follow the news reports, and you know, you watch in horror the folks that were affected, the ones that lost their lives. And you know, you think of being in that situation of course, but you think about the coaches that had guided those folks.

As a coach myself, you know, I always refer to the players I've coached as, those are my guys. Those are my guys. Wherever they go, as time goes on, as they move on, if they get a scholarship or maybe they get in trouble or whatever happens, you know, those are my guys. And I can't help but think that that's the situation that happened with the Humboldt Broncos.

I know a former teammate of mine, Kelly Bates, he had a football camp up there. He was so proud of being from Humboldt and he gathered coaches from around the CFL [Canadian Football League] to come and join that. And one of the folks that spent so much time, because he cared about his community, was Tyler Bieber. He was always out there helping out. He lost his life on Friday.

I also think of another coach, Mark Cross. He was an assistant coach. And of course, Coach Haugan. I saw a clip on the news of one of his former players that was just so overcome with emotion and how that affected him.

But just briefly back to Mark, he was one of our guys — all the players, all the coaches were — he was one of our guys in Parks, Mr. Speaker. He spent the summers, the last nine years working at Regina Beach from the Rowan's Ravine crew during the summers to help pay for . . . He went to the university of York and he was giving back to his community. His cousin said here:

I can honestly say I didn't know a more kind-hearted, generous, caring, and overall nice person. Mark was one of those people that just made you feel safe and brought a

special spark when you were in his presence.

I always say if you want to help your community, you want to make an impact in your community, give back by coaching. Use your talents to give back that way. It's certainly a powerful thing when a player or somebody that you've mentored gets it and they excel and they can feel good about themselves. All teachers know that feeling. Coaches know that feeling when you're able to bridge that gap, help someone get where they need to be, not only on the ice or the field or whatever technically, but in their lives as they go on.

So they're mentors. They pass on their passion for the game. I think those coaches certainly did that with their players. And I think when you learn those things, players, if they don't get to go on, many of them become coaches themselves and they move on and they become mentors. And the cycle just perpetuates itself. So I think those folks that lost their lives on Friday, their teaching, their passion, that will live on with others as they've been touched by their example.

I didn't know any of those coaches. I didn't know any of those kids. But from my time as a teacher, as a coach, I think I do know them. I think I do know them. Not individually of course, but I know they're just great people. I know they're good people. They're chasing a dream. They're away from home, being away from their families for months on end just to chase that. I think there's something very noble and very special about that. I think they know it's a privilege. It's a privilege to play at that level. You know it's a privilege. Very few get that opportunity. They found structure. They found accountability. They found competition.

I remember late in my career the hockey season and football season would kind of overlap in the spring there a little bit when you're doing your off-season workouts and you'd cross paths a little bit with those kids. At that time I was an old man. But they're just great people. They're just high energy. They're funny. They are respectful. Boy, those kids were awesome. I kept saying, boy, if I was younger I'd definitely be hanging out with those guys if they'd let me.

You know, they knew what it was like for somebody to ask for their autograph, ask for a selfie, to have people put their cash down — their hard-earned cash — to come watch them play, to cheer them on. And it meant a lot to them. It meant a lot to them, I'm sure of it. I'm sure they have that young feeling of just, here I am, I'm doing exactly what I want to do with my life. There's no place I'd rather be. And that's a great time of life.

I don't know their parents, but I know they're so proud. They're so proud of their players. I'm sure there was some parents that would, you know, bore their co-workers to death about how great their kids are doing. We made the playoffs. My kid scored a goal. And there's others that are very stoic about it and just that quiet pride of having one of your kids sacrifice so much, work so hard, put it all on the line just for a dream. And they're so proud of that, that they had that goal, they had that drive and that determination.

I've been on a few bus trips myself. You know I think it's as much a part of the game and it's been said before that, you

know, it's just like another locker room. It's the same as putting on your helmet or lacing up your skates or a slapshot or watching film, whatever. Being on the bus, that's certainly a special time.

You know I don't know it, but I think probably on the Broncos team, the coaches were right at the front, the veterans are at the back, guys in the middle probably were really into studying so they wanted to read their book and they were . . . At the back, they were probably playing cards, having a good time, watching movies. I'm sure they watched movies to pass time.

Now technology, I'm sure, has changed over the years. They can do the iPad and the peer-to-peer and all that. But there was probably superstitious seating arrangements. If a guy was on a streak, he's definitely sitting in that same spot. And they might move around if things weren't going well for the team. I'm sure there are some bathroom rules. If it was a shorter bus trip, there might be ways around that.

So those are, you know . . . I'm sure for all the folks that have been on bus trips before . . . I know though, that team was together. They did the old playoff tradition. Some teams get tattoos, I've heard. Some dye their hair. Some shave their hair. Some grow beards, etc. So this was a team, this was a team. And again I say, no place I think they'd rather be. They were enjoying life, Mr. Speaker. I think that's what makes this situation so very hard, so very hard.

Mr. Speaker, I'll wrap it up here. These are very tough times. These are tough times for everyone involved, for the whole province, obviously Humboldt, and all the folks involved with the team. My heart goes out to them. And, Mr. Speaker, I know in Saskatchewan and in Humboldt, these are the toughest folks you're going to find, as tough as you're going to find. And you know, they're going to get through it. They're not going to get over it, but they're going to get through it. These are our guys, Mr. Speaker. Memory eternal. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Swift Current.

Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know I left Swift Current this morning, and as I've done so many times, hundreds of times, just east of the city I passed the site of the 1986 Swift Current Broncos bus crash. And I've thought about that spot often, but never as much as I have this past weekend.

Thirty years ago, 30-plus years ago, Trent Kresse, Scott Kruger, Chris Mantyka, and Brent Ruff perished that day in late December 1986. The Swift Current Broncos and every minor hockey team in Swift Current now wears a four-leaf clover patch on their jersey that has the numbers of the jersey numbers of those players who passed that day to remember them forever.

I was asked on the weekend why it is that, why this tragedy in Humboldt has touched so many lives. And you know, it's not just the magnitude of the accident, but I think it's the nature of it, the fact that hockey is part of the fabric of our communities, of our province, and of our nation. I'm sure just about every one of us can either relate in some way or another. We've either played hockey or had a brother or a sister or a relative who has played hockey or who has coached or who has volunteered.

And as we talked about earlier today, the bus trips. So many of us have either been a hockey player who has ridden on one of those buses, or we run a fan bus, or perhaps you're a part of a basketball team or a band concert or a school trip. So many of us have ridden on a bus just like that on a cold Saskatchewan day down one of those long stretches of highway.

Mr. Speaker, I didn't grow up in Swift Current. I wasn't there in 1986 when the crash happened. I was born and raised in northeast Saskatchewan near Melfort, and my mom and dad had season tickets to the Melfort Mustangs of the SJHL. We'd go and watch them play teams like the Humboldt Broncos and the Nipawin Hawks and all the other teams in the league.

And I remember going to high school and going to class with some of the players on those teams. And, Mr. Speaker, on the weekends, on Friday and Saturday nights, they were our hometown heroes. They are our warriors on the ice. But the rest of the time, they were just kids in high school trying to pass algebra 30 like I was. They were involved in the community. They were living with a billet family. So you got to know those players and they became family.

When I moved to Swift Current in spring of 1996, the bus crash was one of the things that I knew about. Everybody knew about it and talks about it in Swift Current. And I moved to Swift Current actually to take a radio job, and my dream when I was a kid was to be a hockey play-by-play announcer. And I started off as a news announcer for a radio station, but in my second year there I got a chance to live out that dream and I was asked to be the colour commentator for the Swift Current Broncos for three seasons.

And that's when I had an opportunity to ride the team bus and sit at the front of the bus with my play-by-play guy, Regan Bartel; the coach at the time, Todd McLellan was the head coach of the Swift Current Broncos. And some of the other members talked about today, you know, the hierarchy of the bus. The rookies were usually near the front, the veterans near the back. And I think of how much things have changed, but how much things have stayed the same. Just kids on a bus, a locker room on wheels going to play a sport that they loved. Listening to music. Playing cards. Watching movies.

At the crash site at Humboldt on the weekend they found a shattered DVD [digital versatile disc] of the movie *Slap Shot* and you think of how many hockey players have watched that movie, and they still do today despite how old that movie is.

[15:15]

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to be standing here today. None of us do. I never want to do this again. But I can think of 15 people who would trade anything in the world to be here today, to go to work one more time, to go to school, to hug a loved one, to lace up the skates one more time.

Adam Herold, Jaxon Joseph, Jacob Leicht. The three Logans — Logan Boulet, Logan Hunter, Logan Schatz. Conner Lukan, Evan Thomas, Parker Tobin, Stephen Wack. They're just boys, Mr. Speaker, just boys. Broadcaster Tyler Bieber, chasing his dream. Volunteer statistician — he was a volunteer — Brody Hinz. Bus driver Glen Doerksen, who drove thousands of trips,

was entrusted with the safety of these young players and had done it faithfully so many times. And the coaches, assistant coach Mark Cross and head coach Darcy Haugan, tasked with more than just teaching players how to play hockey, but teaching them how to become young men and young adults.

Pastor Sean Brandow at the vigil last night spoke about scars. He said, "A scar is something that is healed, but still there." This isn't going to go away. It's not going to be as raw. Can we heal? Yes. Will the scar be there? Yes.

The scars are still there in Swift Current. They'll always be there, but we'll always remember those four players from that day, December of 1986. The people of Humboldt, the friends, families, and loved ones of those lost will always remember those people. The wound will go away, but there will always be a scar.

On behalf of the city of Swift Current and surrounding area and from one Broncos organization to another, our thoughts and prayers are with you. May God give you strength.

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find it very difficult to speak at this time and I know all of my colleagues have felt the same way. However I would really like to just say a few words from both myself and from my colleague from Cut Knife-Turtleford on behalf of our Battlefords North Stars and indeed the whole of Battlefords and the northwest of the province.

Firstly I would like to also lend my voice to say thank you to all of the first responders, the emergency people that showed up, the police — everybody who has done such a great job to try to lessen the pain of this tragedy, a tragedy like this which is just absolutely unfathomable. It has struck the hearts of everyone who is aware of it, not only from the hockey community but from every person in Saskatchewan, in Canada, and indeed around the world.

Mr. Speaker, the North Stars have played in the SJHL since the early '70s. And of course their players since that time have travelled thousands of miles in buses to arenas around this province including to Humboldt, as have many other teams, Mr. Speaker, at every level and of other sports, as has been mentioned here already.

Shandon Reichert, president of the North Stars sends this message, and I quote:

We are devastated by this tragedy that occurred. Please know that you are in our hearts, our thoughts, and our prayers. We will support you in any way that we can. May God bless the entire Humboldt Bronco organization and their families. We are all Humboldt Broncos today.

And Steven Nelson the vice-president and a former player with the North Stars wanted me to share this message, and he said:

I offer my condolences to the entire Humboldt Broncos organization and all those affected by this tragedy. Our hockey family is grieving right now and our hearts go out

to you. We hope that in this time, the memories and the support will help you heal the scars and make everyone stronger. Today, tomorrow, and always Humboldt will be in our hearts. We are all Humboldt strong.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of everyone in The Battlefords and in the constituency of Cut Knife-Turtleford and all of our northwest of our province, I extend our sincere condolences to all of the families and the billet families and all those who are close to this tragedy and have been affected. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all of you as you face the daunting task of coping and healing and remembering the beautiful souls that you have lost.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to add a couple of comments with respect to the motion that has been put forward by the member, from the Premier of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of things that have struck me over the last couple of days in watching the coverage of such a, as everybody has said, an unspeakable tragedy, and in part, the national coverage of this terrible accident, describing Humboldt as the city of Humboldt. And what was striking me about that is wondering if the people of Canada or the people outside of this country that were watching this coverage, could really put into context what this really means.

Humboldt is a city, in what we call a city in this province, but Humboldt is a small town, Mr. Speaker. About 6,000 people live in Humboldt. And for those of us that have grown up in or around communities where there's an SJHL team, I don't think people really understand what that team means to that community. These are young . . . They're boys, Mr. Speaker. They've come from around the province, from outside of the province. Some may be from that home community, but really these are boys that are learning about hockey and improving their craft.

But they're really learning about life at such a tender age. Life is but a vapour, and these boys come from all over western Canada to these 12 communities across our province, in the case of the SJHL, and they're really learning about life. And they give so much in a short amount of time to their communities.

I remember the Weyburn Red Wings were my team and, you know, guys like Gary Gaudet to a seven- or an eight-year-old, what somebody like that meant to our community, Mr. Speaker.

So these young, young men, these boys, they go into the classrooms. The young students get to know who these players are, and for how much joy that playing hockey brings to them. I sometimes don't know at that age if they really understand how much joy that they bring to these communities. You have young kids all the way up to seniors who, on a Friday night or a Tuesday night, this is the thing to do, is to go watch the Broncos — in this case the Broncos — play hockey, Mr. Speaker. So I really hope that that comes across, that while this is the city of Humboldt, it's a small town and this is their team, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, so I was thinking about that over the last couple of days and thinking about the families, the billet families who take these kids in — they really just immediately become a part of their family — and the families that are back home, wherever that home may be, Mr. Speaker.

In grade 12 I worked for the local radio station and my job was . . . I was the operator of the hockey games. And so that meant that when we went to a commercial break, I needed to be there to turn the commercial on and make sure I turned the mikes down for the guys that were announcing the game.

And, Mr. Speaker, to show the extent of the families back home that were thinking about and following their kids that were in a different town playing hockey, I'll never forget the fact that Mark Hartigan's mother would phone me every night at the radio station that the Red Wings were playing, whether the game was in Weyburn or whether they were on the road. She would phone me from Fort St. John, British Columbia to be put on hold, so that for those two and a half hours while she was on hold, she could listen to the hockey game.

So, Mr. Speaker, my heart breaks for those parents that are sitting at the bedsides of the hospital bed of their kid that is fighting for their life. And I weep for those parents that will never see their kids come back home, that will never return from the season. Mr. Speaker, I offer my condolences to not just the co-workers of Tyler Bieber and the young statistician that worked for the radio station, but everybody in the Golden West radio family who were watching these two young guys develop their career, and in fact across the sports media in the province. It's a small community, and I know that they're all hurting right now.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I just offer my sympathies to everybody in Humboldt and the hockey community.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Mr. Goudy: — Mr. Speaker, on Friday night I was on the phone with the staff sergeant of our detachment. And I'm the chaplain for our area and so I was sent out to spend time with the RCMP and watched them have to inform the families where their children were at, whether they were alive or not. And it was tough for them that night, standing with them out in the cold.

And you know, I was racing on the way out there with a few other guys and we all sat quiet in the truck. And it never crossed my mind to think, you know, I should phone the Premier; he might be able to help. As nice of a guy as our Education minister, Highways minister, nobody came to mind. Who do you call? Who do you phone? And so as we were driving out, everything was quiet.

You know, we've been saying that our thoughts and our prayers are with the families and the friends, and so why don't we just bow our heads together? You know, this is a beautiful House, but nobody can just barge in and come and ask our Premier for a favour. But you know, God tells us that in times of need, he says we can come boldly before the throne of grace to find grace for that time of need. And none of us here, no matter who we are, what position we hold, can mend a heart, but he can. So

let's bow our heads together just for a few minutes, and just pray for the families.

Father in heaven, you said to fulfill the royal law that we should bear one another's burdens. But Lord, these burdens are too heavy for any of us to carry. And so, Lord, we come before your throne in heaven boldly, to ask in this time for the need of these mothers and these fathers, these brothers and these sisters, who've lost . . . Lord, I just pray that you would give them the strength to face all their tomorrows, that, Lord, as they go to bed at night, they could rest. And as they wake up in the morning, you can give them strength to face the day and to know that, as Sean had said, those wounds will turn to scars.

[15:30]

Lord, give them hope, we pray. Give them strength. I think of your words, of your son when he was dying on the cross and he said to his best friend, Son, behold your mother. He looked at his mom and he said, look after my mom. And he said to his mom, Mother, behold your son, and he pointed to John.

And, Lord, we've got each other. And for everyone here and for everyone in this province, I pray that we would really lean on each other and fulfill that royal law: bear each other's burdens; care for one another; uphold each other.

So, Father, in the midst of all this devastation and grief, bring peace. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Speaker: — These have been tragic days for Humboldt and this province. I'd like to thank all of the members for their words. I hope they've been of some comfort. I've been on that bus, and we are all Humboldt strong.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — I would ask leave to move a motion of transmittal.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has asked for leave. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. I recognize the Government House Leader.

TRANSMITTAL MOTION

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — Thank you.

That the Speaker, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, transmit copies of the motion as well as the verbatim transcripts of the debate to the families of those lost, the Humboldt Broncos junior hockey club, and the city of Humboldt.

The Speaker: — It has been moved:

That the Speaker, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, transmit copies of the motion as well as verbatim transcripts of the debate to the families of those lost, the Humboldt Broncos junior hockey club, and the city of Humboldt.

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.

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

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

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved that this House be now adjourned. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:33.]

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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Hon. Gene Makowsky

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor
and Gaming Authority
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