



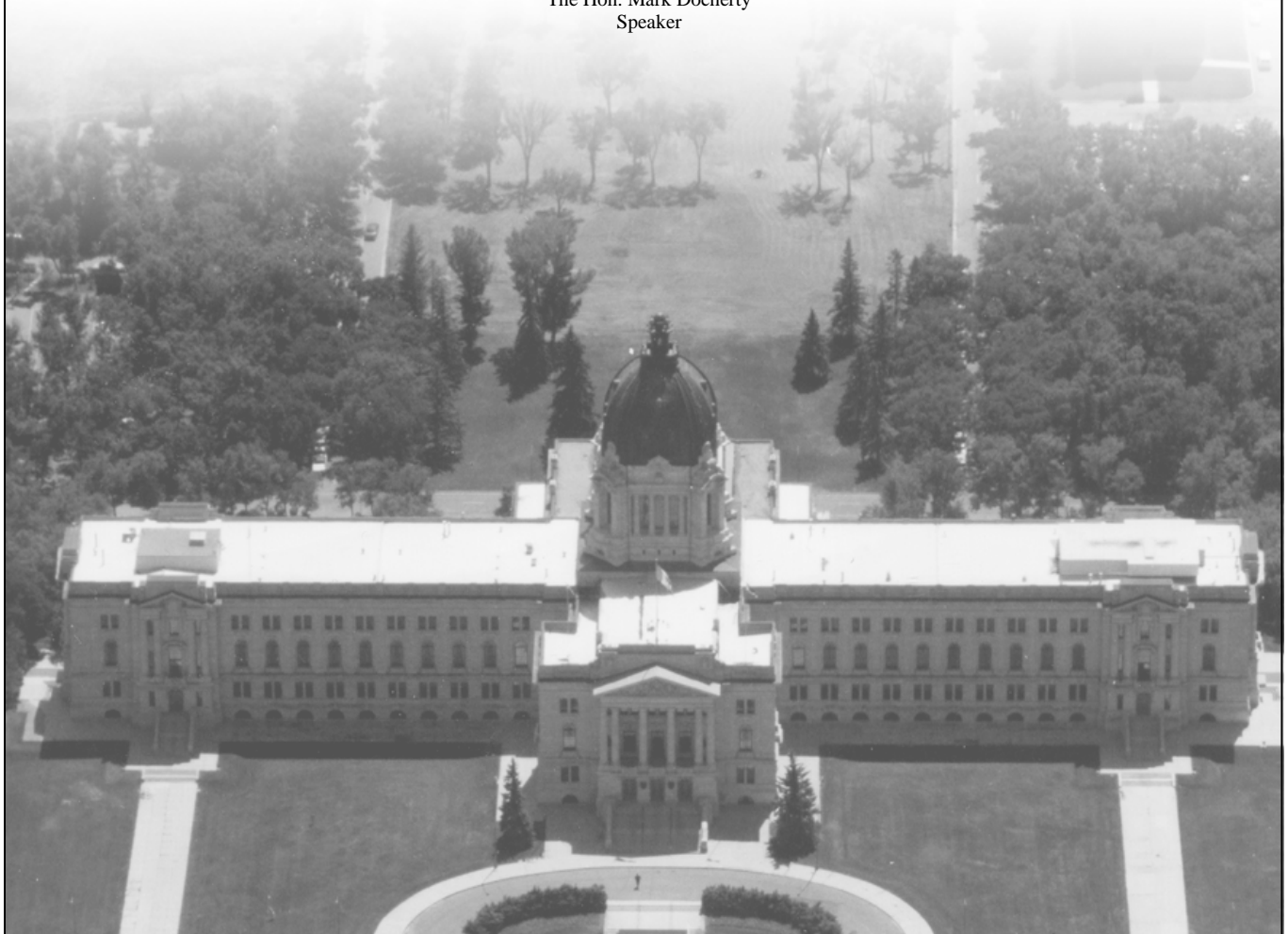
THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

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



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
3rd Session — 28th Legislature

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

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Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 48; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 13

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Introduction of guests. No? Sorry, folks. I recognize the member for Moose Jaw North.

Mr. Michelson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And just with the lack of introductions, I thought it's quite appropriate that we should welcome the members from the House of Prayer back to our legislature this morning. They're very diligent in coming here just about every Thursday and praying for both sides, and I notice that they're behind the opposition so that tells us something as well. Aside from that, I would like to welcome them and ask all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this tax is being forced on us by a federal government that only worries about jobs in Quebec, completely forgetting about the 100,000-plus job losses in Alberta and Saskatchewan due to their war on oil. While the federal government wants to protect SNC-Lavalin, they have forgotten who has been providing Quebec with federal transfer payments since its inception. And if that's not bad enough, the Leader of the NDP [New Democratic Party] right here in Saskatchewan is in favour of a carbon tax that would devastate our economy. Meanwhile he promises that, if elected, he would spend billions of borrowed dollars, Mr. Speaker. This just shows how out of touch the NDP are with the Saskatchewan people, and that's why you'll never sit on this side of the Chamber.

I would like to read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Carrot River and White Fox. I so present.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You'd have to wonder what's in the member's brownies that was just on his feet, Mr. Speaker.

But I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned petitioners

from across the province, citizens, businesses, and communities in every corner of our province as it relates to the hike and expansion of the PST [provincial sales tax] onto construction labour by the Sask Party government. Of course it's the epitome of a job-killing tax. And very sadly we see the results of that, Mr. Speaker: permits down all across our province; a construction industry that's hurting, Mr. Speaker; an economy that's hurting; Saskatchewan workers that have been forced to move from Saskatchewan pulling them away of families, Mr. Speaker, and hurting us to retain the skilled labour that we need to build Saskatchewan.

And the prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to stop saddling families and businesses with the costs of their mismanagement and immediately reinstate the PST exemption on construction and stop hurting Saskatchewan businesses and families.

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents of White City and Regina. I so submit.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling on the Sask Party to stop the cuts to our kids' classrooms. Mr. Speaker, those who have signed this petition are very concerned about the lasting and damaging impacts of this government's decision to underfund our kids' classrooms. And perhaps the minister will add them to the hundreds of letters that he's received recently from teachers outlining just the same concerns.

I'll read the prayer:

We, the undersigned, call upon the government to reverse the senseless cuts to our kids' classrooms and stop making families, teachers, and everyone who works to support our education pay the price for the Sask Party's mismanagement.

Mr. Speaker, those who have signed this petition today reside in Rosetown, Saskatoon, and Maple Creek. I do so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for a public inquiry into the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] land deal. The people who signed this petition would like to bring to our attention the following: the Sask Party has refused to come clean on the GTH land deal, a deal where Sask Party government insiders made millions flipping land and taxpayers lost millions. Instead of shining a light on the issue and calling a public inquiry, the Sask Party government is instead hiding behind excuses around public prosecutions in Manitoba. New details on the land deal continue to emerge, so showing Saskatchewan people still do not have the full story behind the GTH land deal. And, Mr. Speaker, we have to remember it is Saskatchewan people who footed the bill for the GTH land deal and deserve nothing less than the truth.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to stop hiding behind partisan excuses and immediately call for a judicial inquiry and a forensic audit into the GTH land deal.

And, Mr. Speaker, the individuals who have signed this petition today are from the cities of Regina and Moose Jaw. I so submit.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to get big money out of Saskatchewan politics. And the undersigned residents of our province here want to bring to our attention the following: that Saskatchewan's outdated election Act allows corporations, unions, and individuals, even those living outside Saskatchewan, to make unlimited donations to our province's political parties. And, Mr. Speaker, we know that the people of Saskatchewan deserve to live in a fair province where all voices are equal and money can't influence politics.

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

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party to overhaul Saskatchewan's campaign finance laws, to end out-of-province donations, to put a ban on donations from corporations and unions, and to put a donation limit on individual donations.

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

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to present a petition calling for pharmacare for Saskatchewan. These citizens wish to bring to our attention that Canada is the only country with a universal health care system that doesn't include prescription drug coverage, and this oversight results in unnecessary illness and suffering and costs us billions; that over 90 per cent of Canadians agree that we need a national pharmacare program, which makes sense as one in five Canadians don't fill necessary prescriptions because the medications cost too much; and when we cover essential medications, we improve people's quality of life and save millions in downstream costs.

I'd like to read the prayer:

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

This particular petition is signed by individuals from White City and Regina, Mr. Speaker. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota.

International Women's Day

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise to mark International Women's Day, which is tomorrow, and certainly am proud to work with so many wonderful, strong women across caucus and cabinet, including of course the Minister of the Status of Women who truly walks the talk.

Our first consideration on such a day should be with those women around the world who cannot wear, cannot say what they want; who are coerced into marriage or out of education; who cannot seek election or participate in any activity, political or otherwise, that their brothers or fathers or husbands can participate in; and of course with women who experience any form of violence. We stand with them today and every day.

Mr. Speaker, in our line of work, when it comes to politics and women in politics in Canada, we live in interesting times. There has been a lot of talk lately about the, quote, challenge of retention in terms of not only recruiting women but actually retaining them. And we must always strive for that and to make workplaces such as ours family friendly in the broadest sense, not only in the initial maternity months but for women with young and growing children who take care of relatives, who hold families together. We will always work to make them feel welcome and encourage them to be open about the real balances in their lives.

Yes, in this country we are broadly equals. We are fortunate. Our daughters can achieve anything these days. And in political terms, every ministry is the ministry of women. But it is not as if challenges don't remain, and perhaps this day tomorrow is an opportunity to be open about some of them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Closing of Production Facilities

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to pay tribute to one of my constituents: an entrepreneur, an author, a composer, and one of Saskatchewan's shining stars. Rob Bryanton is the president and founder of Talking Dog Studios. Rob's studio was nominated 10 times for Gemini Awards. This studio did the music and audio of all six seasons of *Corner Gas*, the most successful TV series made in Canada. And sadly, Rob had to make the difficult decision to shut down his studio after 30 years.

Now is this because he didn't work hard or didn't have state-of-the-art equipment or failed to diversify? No, Mr. Speaker. After the film tax credit was cut, the film industry went elsewhere. But even then, Rob diversified his business. He created The Grid VR, the second virtual reality arcade in Canada.

Now Netflix recently announced a \$500 million investment in film production in Canada, and while Alberta and Manitoba are included, Saskatchewan is being shut out because this

government axed the film tax credit and ended up costing this province and our city hundreds of millions of dollars of economic activity. Most of the industry's skilled labour force has left.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to commend Rob for his extraordinary innovations, for the films and TV shows that he contributed to, and to thank him for his lifetime of service to this industry. I hope that he can find a way to keep his innovative work going here in Saskatchewan.

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

Campaign Empowers and Strengthens Women

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we continue to celebrate International Women's Day here in the House, I would like to highlight an empowering and important campaign launched by Hillberg & Berk. This campaign will help and honour many courageous women everywhere, empowering them to stand up for our rights and our values.

Mr. Speaker, this year Hillberg & Berk has designed a wonderful new piece of jewellery called the Venus pin. This pin will represent empowerment and the strength of women. For every pin purchased, Hillberg & Berk will provide a six-month supply of feminine hygiene products to a woman or a girl in need. Mr. Speaker, each day women are faced with many obstacles, and unfortunately access to basic needs such as feminine hygiene products is a reality for far too many women and girls, both around the world but right here in our communities.

I am grateful for Hillberg & Berk's generosity and empowering message on this International Women's Day and encourage all members of this House to purchase a pin for themselves or for an inspiring woman or girl in their life.

Mr. Speaker, I will now ask that all members please join me in thanking Hillberg & Berk for their generosity and their empowering message for this year's International Women's Day campaign. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dedication and Advocacy on International Women's Day

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is International Women's Day and I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the significance of this day. This year's theme is Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change. This theme highlights that innovation championed by women and girls is important and necessary to achieve gender equality.

[10:15]

While this day is a time to celebrate, and I know many of us will be attending events throughout the weekend, it is also an important opportunity to remember the hardships that women face every day. A recent report released by the Canadian Femicide Observatory revealed that women and girls in this country are killed every two and a half days, largely because of their gender. There is much more that must be done to ensure

women's safety.

I would like to thank the staff and volunteers in Saskatchewan's 14 crisis shelters and five second-stage shelters throughout the province. They work tirelessly on behalf of women and children who are impacted by violence. Their leadership in communities reflects Saskatchewan's caring nature, something we are so proud of.

I would ask all members to join me in acknowledging International Women's Day and thanking staff and volunteers of the transition houses for their dedication and advocacy on behalf of women and children in Saskatchewan.

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

Doctor Known as the Sherlock Holmes of Saskatchewan

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the spirit of International Women's Day, I rise in the House today to highlight a very empowering and inspiring innovator. Dr. Frances McGill was Canada's first female forensic pathologist, and she taught investigators from across Canada about forensic evidence analysis and preservation.

She completed her medical degree in Winnipeg with the highest class average and became the provincial bacteriologist in Regina in 1918, at the height of the Spanish flu epidemic. In 1920 she was the provincial pathologist. In 1922 she was appointed the director of the Saskatchewan Laboratories.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. McGill became known as the Sherlock Holmes of Saskatchewan. She travelled our province by any means necessary to each scene of the crime, including by dogsled and float plane. Applying her training as a medical doctor to study a crime scene gave her an advantage, as she was able to protect and preserve evidence in ways that had never been done before. Mr. Speaker, her expertise with medical and scientific research allowed her to deliver rigorous and memorable testimonies in court.

Dr. McGill was chosen as one of Canada's top innovators by *Reader's Digest* in 2017. Her work as an RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] pathologist had a lasting impact on investigations in Saskatchewan and across Canada. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to please join me in recognizing this trailblazing innovator from Saskatchewan, Dr. Frances McGill. Thank you.

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

Hospital Fundraiser Surpasses Goal

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on February the 7th I had the opportunity to attend a very exciting announcement at our beautiful Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford. That announcement highlighted the fact that our fundraising for furniture and equipment for the Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford, named the New Beginnings campaign, had reached and in fact even surpassed their goal.

The event featured recognition of a \$1 million donation from

Gordon and Jill Rawlinson which pushed the total over the top to nearly \$9 million. The Rawlinsons joined literally hundreds of other donators, both large and small contributions, from individuals and businesses from all parts of our province. As well, many local municipal governments donated, like the town of Battleford, the RM [rural municipality] of Battle River, the RM of North Battleford, the RM of Turtle River, and several other RMs.

Corinne Bernier Delainey, the fundraising lead, and all of her team worked tirelessly to ensure that their goal of \$8 million was reached. We can never thank them enough for all of their efforts. I would ask all of my colleagues to join with me in thanking all of the generous donors who contributed to the New Beginnings campaign, and especially to Corinne and her tremendous team for the job they did. I know that all of the patients and staff in the Saskatchewan Hospital, North Battleford will long enjoy the furniture and equipment funded by their efforts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Lloydminster.

Northern Centre Provides Mental Health and Addictions Services

Ms. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on February 14th my colleague, the Minister for Rural and Remote Health, visited La Ronge to reaffirm our government's commitment to mental health and addictions supports in northern Saskatchewan. Our government is providing 2.5 million in capital funding for 10 addictions beds at the Lac La Ronge Indian Band's new Wellness, Health and Recovery Centre. The centre will also include mini-lodges as part of a remote community program that allows for clients to stay or transition in their home communities.

Mr. Speaker, this funding addresses the recommendation in our mental health and addictions action plan that government partner with First Nations and Métis peoples in planning and delivering mental health and addictions services in their communities. Mr. Speaker, alongside the federal Minister of Indigenous Services, numerous indigenous leaders, and members of the community, our government's commitment was well received. This wellness centre will blend Western and traditional indigenous approaches to healing and recovery to achieve the best possible results.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to providing mental health and addictions supports to people across Saskatchewan, and this project is yet another example of that commitment, one that will benefit residents in the North for years to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Operating Deficit and Balanced Budget

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Deputy Premier recently told reporters that there would be an operating deficit this year but the budget would be balanced. Now he may have been confused or he may have been sharing more than he was supposed to that day, but the Premier's attempts to clarify failed

to do so.

So the question for the Premier is: will the operating debt increase this year, and does he really believe that Saskatchewan people don't understand that if you take in less money than you spend, you don't have a balanced budget?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, we've been clear in our three-year plan to balance. We've been clear that we've made, at times, challenging decisions to ensure that we are on track to balance that budget in this spring's . . . as we release this spring's budget, Mr. Speaker, and we remain on track to introduce a balanced budget on March the 20th. And, Mr. Speaker, as far as details to that document, the members of the opposition are going to have to wait till March the 20th when that will be revealed as the Finance minister will rise in her place and deliver the budget on behalf of the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

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

Changes to Lobbyist Legislation

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That sort of a vague answer further underlines what we know is going to be coming forward. We hear no commitment to not having operating debt . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order, please. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That sort of vague answer certainly gives us no hope that we're going to see an actual balanced budget, but that we're simply going to see the same sort of semantic games that we've seen from this government in the past.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have a lobbying registry in this province, and its purpose is to try to have some check on the influence of lobbyists on government decisions. We know that decisions on the other side are influenced by corporate donors, but people also have a right to know who's bending their ear and influencing their decisions through lobbying, Mr. Speaker.

Now the lobbying registrar has already indicated that there are a number of fixes that could be done to improve this system. One of those, we have 100 hours that you're allowed to lobby in this province without any record going on. That's an enormous amount of time, an enormous amount of influence on the government.

So my question is, Mr. Speaker, the Justice minister had said that he was interested in making changes and closing those loopholes. Now he's backed away from this. What does the Premier think? Should we continue to have 100 hours of lobbying with no record whatsoever?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, when the lobbyist

legislation was introduced in this province, a 100-hour threshold was thought to be appropriate and in fact was supported by an all-party committee, including the members opposite. It was the same policy . . .

Well if the members don't want to hear the answer, Mr. Speaker, I could just stop and sit down and just let them continue asking questions. But if they would like to hear the answer, Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to give them the answer.

The 100-hour threshold was used by most jurisdictions in Canada at that time. Since that time, people have looked at it. They consult with their independent officers and they look to see what changes are being made. Some of the other provinces have chosen to reduce it to 50 hours per year, and we're looking at that as well, Mr. Speaker. We've had meetings with the Conflict Commissioner and, Mr. Speaker, we've indicated that it's something that needs to be changed, and we'll be working towards that end, Mr. Speaker.

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

Access to Child Care and Early Learning Care

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan can and should be the best place in Canada to be a kid or to raise a kid. The first 1,000 days of a child's life are so important, have such an influence on their long-term health and well-being, and yet we have the worst access in the entire country when it comes to child care. In Saskatoon there's one licensed space for every three kids that needs one. Our subsidy rates are stuck in the 1980s, and 43 per cent of kids entering kindergarten aren't ready to do so.

Mr. Speaker, now we've heard about a handful of new spaces, but this is no type of a plan to really address the huge deficit in childhood . . . access to child care and early learning. When kids can't access child care, that holds back those children. That holds back their parents. That holds back our economy.

Mr. Speaker, how can this government say they're balancing the budget when we have such an enormous deficit when it comes to early childhood?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member asked a question, Mr. Speaker, and it's a good question on the morning when we announced 130 more child care spaces, Mr. Speaker, in Delisle, in Regina, in Moose Jaw, in Saskatoon, and in Humboldt, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, here's a number for the Leader of the Opposition — 46. Mr. Speaker, 46 per cent of licensed child care spaces in this province have been created by this government, Mr. Speaker. More work to do, Mr. Speaker. We've had a commitment from the federal government to continue to fund and expand child care in this province through our early learning agreements that we signed last year, Mr. Speaker, with the federal government.

Certainly more work to do, Mr. Speaker. But this commitment that we've made over the past 10 years while we've been in government to child care in this province, Mr. Speaker, speaks for itself. We'll continue to build child care spaces, Mr. Speaker.

It's important. We recognize the importance of ensuring that children get a good start in life, Mr. Speaker. It's clear on our commitment on early learning, Mr. Speaker, and it's clear on our commitment on child care spaces.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, 10 years, 10 years and more in government and still dead last when it comes to child care. This minister tries to get up and boast about a couple of new spaces, but you've had a decade to do this. And now you have Quebec, BC [British Columbia], Alberta, Ontario, so much better plans when it comes to affordability, access, and their economies have benefited as a result.

Because this government fails to make that investment, they're holding back families. We're losing millions in GDP [gross domestic product] from decreased productivity, not to mention the savings. When you invest in early childhood development, that comes back dollar for dollar, 4 to 6 to \$8 a few years down the road. The failure to do so is a big miss on the part of this government. When will they come forward with a real plan and get out of last place and put kids first?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — You know, Mr. Speaker, licensed child care centres is affordable in this province, Mr. Speaker. Saskatoon and Regina rank 8th and 10th among the 28 largest cities in this country, Mr. Speaker, for the lowest child care cost.

Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite, if the Leader of the Opposition is truly interested in supporting licensed child care spaces, Mr. Speaker, early learning, then he should support this government, Mr. Speaker, and this Premier who stands up for this province, Mr. Speaker, who stands up for the economy of this province, who stands up for the economy of this province when we're facing challenges across the nation, Mr. Speaker.

We stand with our commitment to enhancing child care spaces, Mr. Speaker, enhanced early learning opportunities for kids, Mr. Speaker. Just last month I announced, along with the University of Saskatchewan, a new pilot project, Mr. Speaker, at the university, to enhance early years education among our students at the College of Education, Mr. Speaker.

These are real commitments, Mr. Speaker, to early childhood education. They are real commitments, Mr. Speaker, to enhancing child care spaces in this province.

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

Saskatchewan Housing Market and Provincial Economy

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan housing starts have taken a big hit, down over 67 per cent compared to this time last year. That's the worst rate in Canada, one of only two provinces to see a decrease. The Sask Party's decision to add PST to construction labour is a big driver of this problem.

[10:30]

But some of the decisions this government made through the

Saskatchewan Immigrant Investment Fund have made things much, much worse. The SIIF [Saskatchewan Immigrant Investor Fund Inc.] started, they had started on a home program, this government's answer to the housing crunch of 2010-11. But instead of targeting the low-income housing that was needed, they funded new builds based on the average market price instead. Does the minister recognize that by getting government into the home building business, they've made our housing market much, much worse through oversupply?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the members opposite refuse to recognize that the housing market has been going down right across Canada and the recognition is there each and every day. There's usually one or two or more articles. There's a number of reports that have been written about how the federal changes to mortgages has affected the housing market, that first-time homeowner buyers are being shut out of the market.

But, Mr. Speaker, when the members opposite call a number of times to reverse our decision on PST in construction, Mr. Speaker, what is their plan to replace that money in order to sustain health care, education, and social safety nets?

Well I've heard them say it's got to be the corporate income tax. They would have to increase the corporate income tax by 5.2 per cent in order to backfill that money, Mr. Speaker. That would put us at the highest corporate income tax in the entire country, which is exactly where we were when the NDP were in power, which is exactly why people left this province. They would take us right back there at 17 per cent corporate income tax. We're not going back to those days.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, the question was about why did the government get into the home-building business. The definition of a housing bubble, Mr. Speaker, is a run-up in housing supply driven by high levels of investment. Eventually demand goes down while supply keeps going up, and the bubble bursts. That's what we see in Saskatchewan. And the Sask Party has exacerbated the problem by flooding the market with more market-value properties.

Will the Minister for CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] admit that this program fed the housing bubble and has hurt — not helped — our housing market in the long run?

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

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan Immigrant Investor Fund and the housing that they have provided, low-cost housing for many people throughout this province, Mr. Speaker. And it was a very successful program. It employed people building those projects, and it give people the affordability. They were affordable for people to get into those units and to have a house of their own, Mr. Speaker. And that was an important part of that project, Mr. Speaker. Of all the projects that they did, there was only one that had some difficulty with, Mr. Speaker, and that has since been

resolved.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of what we've done in that field and on that file. And, Mr. Speaker, it's been good for the people of Saskatchewan.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, since 2012 through the Saskatchewan Immigrant Investor Fund, this government has doled out more than 328 million in low-interest loans to build thousands of average-priced condos and townhouses in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there's some excitement over there, but I'll finish the question. They took full advantage of all the photo ops, gripping shovels and boosting record numbers of housing starts in our province. Today the housing market in Saskatchewan is in the tank. That taxpayer-backed program has \$10 million of bad debt, and some of those developers are in arrears and others have just gone bankrupt altogether, leaving us, the taxpayer, holding the bag. What's the government's plan to make sure Saskatchewan taxpayers are held whole?

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

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Mr. Speaker, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's awful funny, Mr. Speaker. At the time, at the time, Mr. Speaker, they were complaining that there wasn't enough housing and what would the government do to provide more housing, Mr. Speaker. These were affordable houses that let people go in there, Mr. Speaker. It created employment and it created affordable housing for these people, Mr. Speaker. And this was a program, Mr. Speaker, that even the opposition backed at the time. So, Mr. Speaker, I don't understand where she's coming from this. This did not . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order, please. Maybe you require "Order!" I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments.

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — This was a project that was good for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. There was only one project in that whole Immigrant Investor Fund, Mr. Speaker, that there was some difficulty with, and that's a darn good record. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, there's \$10 million in lost loans and there's \$30 million in impaired loans, so I'm not sure what this minister is talking about. Saskatchewan people have already lost enough money on this government's failed pet project. We lost millions at the GTH, wasted millions on carbon capture and the bypass, and now we stand to lose nearly \$10 million more on this project.

Now when I asked the minister in committee, he sloughed off the concern noting that when he worked at a bank, losing money here and there was just the cost of doing business. Well I've got a news flash for this minister, Mr. Speaker. This money doesn't

belong to the bank; it unequivocally belongs to the people of Saskatchewan. What's his plan to get it back?

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

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Mr. Speaker, I'll try not to get as excited as the member opposite there, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when you're dealing in this type of thing, loan losses are . . . there are some loan losses that are expected, Mr. Speaker.

We had one, one project, Mr. Speaker, and it was a project in Prince Albert. As we discussed in committee, Mr. Speaker, there was one project, Mr. Speaker, and that project is just about finalized and those units will be sold here, Mr. Speaker, hopefully shortly. There's been a number of those units sold.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a good project for the people of Saskatchewan. It's got people into housing that maybe, Mr. Speaker, could not afford to get into a house, Mr. Speaker. And this was a good project. It created employment, and it created that opportunity for people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Development in Wascana Park

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, just before the Sask Party government announced their plan to take over Wascana Park in the 2017-18 budget, they released a report on the future of Wascana Park, *The Heart of Saskatchewan — Wascana Centre*. Deep in that report is a reference to a governance review done by private consultants, and one of their main recommendations was more transparency. But apparently the government won't make that report public. That's not very transparent to me, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister do the right thing, the transparent thing, and ensure this report on the future of Wascana is made public?

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much for the question. And I do believe in transparency. I also believe in accuracy on the floor of the House.

Yesterday the member for Regina Douglas Park said that the former lease with the CNIB [Canadian National Institute for the Blind] did not allow subletting. This is not true, Mr. Speaker. In fact subletting was allowed, providing they had the approval of the Wascana Centre Authority. Just a clarification on behalf of the government for the member opposite.

The member is correct. There is a report called *The Heart of Saskatchewan* report. Many quotes have been released into the public. One, and I'll quote:

After much review and analysis, the option that provided the best opportunity to preserve the legacy of Wascana Centre as the legislative grounds in the province's capital city was determined to be the Government of Saskatchewan leading the development of Wascana Centre and assuming responsibility for the centre.

Well the report has many interesting analysis and quotes. It talks about the percentage of funding that went into the park and the government having 60 per cent, reflecting 60 per cent of the members. My understanding is that the Provincial Capital Commission is considering releasing these reports at the appropriate time.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, the minister's just quoted a report we do not have access to. The appropriate time to release that report is right now. Will the minister please table that report?

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — These reports, this what I've quoted from, are in the public record. It says the government would develop a plan for advisory input by all original Wascana Centre Authority partners and stakeholders. These are quotes that have been released to the public. I'm not releasing for . . . [inaudible] . . . Much of the report is online. And again, as I've been informed, the Provincial Capital Commission is in the process of considering releasing this report and many other reports that they're considering at their board meeting.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Well transparency didn't last very long, Mr. Speaker. In a 2013 year-end interview with CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] news, Premier Brad Wall had this to say about his government's approach to the economy and the private sector: "We have said as a government that we're not going to try to pick winners and losers."

Nowhere is this disconnect more obvious than with the land scandal taking place in our largest public park. While the details of the sublease haven't been made public between CNIB and Brandt, it's hard to imagine that agreement would be for any more than the \$1 per year that the CNIB lease is for. Therefore Brandt will be allowed to erect its office building in Wascana Park for a maximum of 40 cents per acre per year. Contrast that with the Conexus building, \$21,000 per acre per year. To the Premier: 40 cents versus 21,000. Who's winning and who's losing?

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well that's a very easy question to answer, Mr. Speaker. The people that are winning are the clients of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. They are people that have been receiving . . . And I said yesterday and I'll say again, for more than 60 years Wascana Park has provided an ideal place for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind to serve their Regina and southern Saskatchewan clients. Centrally located and transit adjacent, the park offers a safe environment for people with sight loss to build their independence.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we may disagree on either side of the House, but my feeling is that the clients of the CNIB, the people that are able to receive those services and to do so where the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] doesn't have to worry

about spending money on real estate and putting their resources there, they can put their resources where it's best suited to the clients of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. It was the right thing to do in 1955; it's the right thing to do today. Thank you.

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

Hiring and Retention of People With Disabilities

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year the Premier publicly committed to an initiative to address his government's poor record on hiring and retaining public servants with disabilities. At the time, people with disabilities represented only 2.1 per cent of Saskatchewan's public service, nowhere near the targets of 12.4 per cent where they should be. And worse yet, the trend was dropping, dropping by 27 per cent in the last four years.

The Premier recognized the problem and said his government needed to do better. But it's been radio silence since then. Our written questions were ordered, and despite claiming there had been progress, the minister responsible still has not responded to my letter on that issue from months ago.

Can the minister update the House today on the findings of the Public Service Commission's review and table the latest numbers on how many people with disabilities are working for the Government of Saskatchewan?

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the important question. And I remember dealing with this issue in estimates last year as well. It's important that we set targets and we try to reach them. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission has set some very aggressive targets that, I know, there's more work to do on, but we have some numbers that we can be very, very proud of, Mr. Speaker.

The number of persons with disabilities in the Government of Saskatchewan workforce increased from 241 in 2017-18 to 323 in the current year, Mr. Speaker, a 34 per cent increase. Of course there's more work to do and we're trying to be creative and look at ways to do it. We have launched a number of initiatives to help improve the recruitment and retention of employees with disabilities, including an online self-declaration process to allow employees to confidentially self-declare a disability at any time.

I can go through the many other programs that I've challenged my deputy and the Public Service Commission to look at if there's a further question. Thank you.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope he remembers my letter of January 4th when I asked for the specific numbers. Now if in fact there was an actual initiative, what the Premier actually committed to be, we would have those tables in front of us today and not just being read out in his creative answer.

You know, the government can claim that this would be the best place for people with disabilities, but their actions suggest

otherwise. From STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] to cutting seniors off SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] and eliminating the rental housing supplement, this government has made it harder for the disability community. And leadership on creative inclusive spaces and community should start at the top.

Again to the minister: what progress has been made specifically in hiring and retaining more people with disabilities? Will he share the report that the Premier called for? Will he share that report today? Thank you.

[10:45]

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, and I'm glad that was a supplementary question because there is more to talk about. Disability awareness training, Mr. Speaker, with the intent of increasing awareness for all employees and fostering a more, a creative work environment — that's a priority for the Government of Saskatchewan and is showing results in the numbers that I said earlier.

The Disability Support Network provides a network for employees with disabilities, promotes awareness, and provides education through organized events. The Be at Work program provides managers with standard processes that support proactive and effective medical accommodation. We're also implementing the Canadian Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace national standard to help organizations promote mental health and prevent psychological harm at work.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the initiatives that the Government of Saskatchewan is doing. We're proud of them. We're looking across the country for best practices. We're also searching into the private sector. You know, Saskatchewan-based company Bridges Health, for example, does excellent work and they've contracted with the Government of Saskatchewan in this regard as well.

So I've demonstrated by the numbers that the priorities are working. There is more work to do but this will continue to be a priority with this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I was going to say ministerial statements, but why is the member on his feet?

Mr. McCall: — Not to pre-empt orders of the day, Mr. Speaker, but point of order.

The Speaker: — What's your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. McCall: — Rule 52 of the House proceedings clearly states, "Any document quoted by a Minister of the Crown in debate or in response to a question during proceedings shall be tabled upon request."

Mr. Speaker, that request was made by my colleague the member from Regina Douglas Park pursuant to what the minister was quoting from, a report that he's not providing to the House. We'd

like to restate that request and we'd like to see that document forthwith.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — To respond to the point of order.

The Speaker: — Go ahead, respond.

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — I was listening and the member had said the quotes were from online, public knowledge. I would ask the Speaker to have their point of order not well taken.

The Speaker: — I've listened to both sides. I'll ask the minister to clarify what he was quoting . . . [inaudible] . . . clarification from the minister what document he was quoting from.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — The quotes are taken from online from *The Heart of Saskatchewan*, March 2017. And again as I indicated in my answer that the Provincial Capital Commission is in the process of releasing this report entirely.

The Speaker: — Yes. Just for clarification, not from the report? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — What I referred to was quotes that are already online, and members opposite can find them there. And I can provide those quotes as well to them later today.

The Speaker: — Okay. I'll take the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I was about to say I was going to take the minister at his word, but I'll take the minister at his word.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 615 — *The Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2019*

The Speaker: — Member from Martensville, you can come to order please. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 615, *The Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2019* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It's moved by the Leader of the Opposition that Bill No. 615 be now introduced and read a first time.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be read a second time?

I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meili: — Next sitting of the Assembly.

The Speaker: — Next sitting of the Assembly.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Rural Crime Reduction Initiatives

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly my pleasure to be able to stand today and lead off debate on this very important motion. At the end of my remarks, I will read the motion for the record.

This morning I would like to touch on three things. Firstly, a few comments on the work of our crime reduction committee. Secondly, some of the innovative actions that our government has taken since this committee concluded its work. And finally, some of the results of those actions.

Mr. Speaker, in November of 2016, then premier, Premier Brad Wall, ordered the formation of a special committee, special crime reduction committee. This committee was composed of MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] from many areas of this province and made up of both urban and rural members. I was honoured to be able to chair this committee made up of fellow MLAs from Estevan in the Southeast, Cypress Hills in the Southwest, Canora-Pelly in the Northeast, Cut Knife-Turtleford in the Northwest, and urban representation from the members from Regina Coronation Park and the former member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Speaker, over approximately a three-month period, we heard presentations in 10 locations, including Estevan, Swift Current, Yorkton, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, La Ronge, La Loche, Meadow Lake, North Battleford, and Regina. And because of the overwhelming response in both Regina and North Battleford, we held second sessions there.

What this committee heard was certainly an eye-opener. And with a broad cross-section of our province covered we were able to get a firm understanding of the concerns our citizens had with crime in their areas.

We sent out over 300 invitations to various stakeholders around the province. Some of these stakeholders included municipal leaders in cities, towns, villages, rural municipalities; Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations; tribal councils; individual First Nations bands; school boards; health regions; Saskatchewan Urban Municipality Association; Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities; the RCMP; municipal police forces; community-based organizations, etc. And in order to further ensure we reached as many interested stakeholders as possible, whenever we scheduled a day in a centre, we sent out blanket invitations to as many in the surrounding area as we could, so that as many people as possible would know that we were in their area. We sent these out, again, to RMs in the area, First Nations, local police forces, and CBOs [community-based organization].

Mr. Speaker, as a result of these efforts we heard a total of 58 presentations from the above-noted groups, as well as some from individuals who had been affected by crime or had crime concerns in their area. As well, we received approximately 40 written submissions. Mr. Speaker, as a result of the presentations

and submissions, we identified several recurring themes. In most rural areas we heard about break and enters, response times, lack of visibility of police, and a feeling of isolation in some areas. In urban areas we heard more about gangs, drug abuse, drug trafficking, etc. Mr. Speaker, we had excellent conversations with Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert police chiefs, as well as with Curtis Zablocki, then assistant commissioner of "F" Division of the RCMP. Both chiefs highlighted the fact that gang activity was becoming more serious and more dangerous with increased weapons-related incidents.

Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of our tour over that three-month span, we itemized the recurring items we heard, and from those concerns we made our report. In that report we made eight recommendations. Our committee was very pleased that our government responded to all of our recommendations.

And I would like to at this time comment on a few of the more pertinent recommendations, such as: we wanted to see that we could ensure we had a full complement of RCMP in our province and increase the visibility in rural areas, and more about that in a few more minutes. We wanted to see a review of legislation to allow municipalities to jointly administer alternative policing programs. And I believe that that very legislation is before this Assembly right now, Bill No. 149. And in fact I think the members opposite have been speaking to that very bill this week.

As well, we recommended our Justice minister lobby the federal government to strengthen the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*. A further recommendation was to work with municipal partners to increase the use of automated licence plate recognition, ALPRs, in more police vehicles. Again, more about that a little bit later. We also recommended our government work with the federal government to provide more programming on reserves and restore funding for gang exit strategy. Further, we also wanted to see more emphasis on mental health and addictions support.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with this Assembly some of the innovative actions that this government has taken. And again I would like to emphasize how pleased we were with the response we received from several ministries.

In response to our recommendations for increased visibility of police in rural areas and reducing response time, we created the protection and response team, the PRT. The PRT is comprised of 258 armed officers who have arrest and detention powers. This team consists of 60 police positions previously deployed to the combined traffic services Saskatchewan, the CTSS, initiative; 30 new police positions; 30 repurposed police positions; 40 highways commercial vehicle enforcement officers with expanded powers; and 98 Ministry of Environment conservation officers. Total funding for this program was \$5.9 million.

And, Mr. Speaker, we are hearing that the combined use of resources is having significant results in our rural areas. And I'd just like to share some of the positive results that we are seeing. Since launching, they have responded to more than 1,500 actions and 113 emergency calls, like vehicle thefts, break and enters in progress, firearms complaints, domestic violence, impaired driving, and threats at schools.

And I'd also like to mention a couple of specific incidents if I could. One occurred after a call to a residence in Pierceland after

a man allegedly had shot at a vehicle. The suspect had allegedly broken into a home and sexually assaulted the person inside. He then drove off, armed with a gun. Soon after that, he got into a fight with another driver approximately two kilometres out of town. During the fight, the suspect shot the gun at another vehicle again before he drove away. RCMP members from four different detachments as well as the newly formed PRT searched the area, and with the help of a local pilot, were able to locate and arrest the man.

Another incident involved a call to RCMP about two suspicious males in a farmyard in the RM at Canwood between Debden and Victoire. The two males were confronted by the property owners and fled on foot, leaving behind a stolen vehicle. Five RCMP officers, along with a police dog, responded to what they considered a high-risk, dynamic situation. A conservation officer attended with a drone and assisted the police on the scene. The conservation officer deployed this drone which was very instrumental in ensuring police safety while a search of the bush line was conducted. Fortunately, the suspects were located and arrested without incident. The CO's [conservation officer] expertise with the drone, tactics involved, and the knowledge of the area was greatly appreciated by the police.

Mr. Speaker, these are just two examples of how the PRT [protection and response team] is helping to make rural Saskatchewan safer. In addition to the PRT, our government has provided approximately \$1.6 million to the RCMP to permanently expand the crime reduction teams to North Battleford and to Prince Albert. Each of these CRT [crime reduction team] teams is comprised of five members and two support staff, and although they are based out of Prince Albert and North Battleford, they could respond to crime hotspots in other areas as well.

I was very pleased to receive a phone call from our North Battleford mayor asking me to sincerely thank our government for this initiative. Since September 1st of 2018 when these two crime reduction teams were established, they have executed 137 arrests, 176 arrest warrants. They've initiated 59 new Criminal Code charges. They've also initiated 83 new provincial offence charges and conducted 1,244 traffic stops., definitely helping to make Saskatchewan safer.

[11:00]

Another exciting innovation that I was pleased to know is being developed is the BeeSecure property tracking app. This is a prototype that is designed to help fight rural crime. This device, being fine tuned with the Ministry of Corrections and Policing, has been tested in my area in the RM of Mayfield, close to the village of Maymont. The asset tracker can be placed in a vehicle like a quad, a snow machine, farm equipment, or other property and will work with as little as one bar of cellphone strength. The app allows the owner to track belongings that go missing by logging in and seeing the GPS [global positioning system] coordinates so that they can contact the police.

Another of our recommendations involved increased use of the automated licence plate recognition. I am pleased to report today that we have now installed 130 more ALPRs, not only in police cars but in conservation officers' vehicles as well. And according to the COs that I have spoken to, this has been an extremely

valuable addition to their tool box. Officers can now be alerted about stolen vehicles, suspended drivers, dangerous individuals, etc., just with the push of a button. That's definitely going to help make our highways safer.

In response to our final recommendation, our government has expanded the police and crisis team, PACT. This program has been expanded to four more cities: Prince Albert, Yorkton, Swift Current, and North Battleford.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to attend the launch of this program in North Battleford last fall and it has been very effective in our community, as well as in the other communities involved. For example, from April of 2017 to September of 2018 — approximately 18 months if my math is correct — in the city of Saskatoon there were 1,815 PACT interceptions, resulting in 320 less emergency room visits. Similar results here in Regina, with 1,280 PACT interceptions, resulting in 358 fewer emergency room visits.

In my own community of the Battlefords, since the establishment of this program on December 12th, in the first month alone 17 calls were diverted from the emergency room, freeing up 85 man-hours that would have been spent by RCMP members who would have had to wait for medical assistance in emergency rooms alongside those affected individuals.

Staff Sergeant Darcy Woolfitt of the Battlefords detachment had this to say about the new program: "The PACT team is already having noted impact with huge savings financially and in resources, as well." He went on to say one of the workers advised that in the previous weekend, 12 calls for service were dealt with. He concluded by saying, "They [meaning the health care workers] are very happy to be engaged in this program and they're seeing the benefit of it already."

Mr. Speaker, this program involves having a mental health care professional accompany the RCMP on a call that has been determined to involve someone with mental health or addictions issues. The benefit of this program are twofold. Firstly, it reduces the amount of time that police officers have to spend in emergency rooms, as noted by Staff Sergeant Woolfitt's comments. Secondly, it takes some of the pressure off our emergency room staff, allowing them more time to deal with other patients. And thirdly and I think most importantly, it ensures that people in crisis are able to get the care they need in a more timely manner.

Mr. Speaker, one final initiative that was highlighted in the 2018-19 budget was the development of community recovery teams. These teams are still being rolled out in our province and, when established, they will involve 40 new full-time employees in teams of eight in five new centres. These teams may be composed of nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, peer specialists, addictions counsellors, plus support staff, and will better support people living with complex, persistent mental health challenges by bringing care to them right in their own community. That's another way that we are working to address some of the issues that affect crime.

In summation, I would just like to repeat that I'm honoured to have been a part of this committee, and I thank all of my committee members for their time and dedication. Our

government's response to crime reduction has certainly been a collaborative effort by many ministries, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the ministers responsible for Justice, Corrections and Policing, Environment, Highways, SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], Health, Innovation Sask, and Advanced Education for their response in working to help make our province a safer place.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to read the motion. I would like to move:

That this Assembly recognizes this government's investment in the innovative programs to reduce crime in rural Saskatchewan and protect Saskatchewan families and businesses.

I so move.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from The Battlefords has moved:

That this Assembly recognize this government's investment in innovative programs to reduce crime in rural Saskatchewan and protect Saskatchewan families and businesses.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Why is the minister on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — To ask for leave to table a document.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Central Services has asked for leave to table a document. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — The minister may go ahead and table the document.

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Today in question period, the member from Regina Douglas Park and the member from Elphinstone-Centre were asking for the document that . . . the quotes that I referred to. The quotes indeed were online, and I understand the entire document is online as well. But I'd like to go ahead and table at this time *The Heart of Saskatchewan: Wascana Centre, Building the Future — the Next 50 years and Beyond, 2014*. I do so table.

The Deputy Speaker: — We will now revert back to the 75-minute debate.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Rural Crime Reduction Initiatives (continued)

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my honour to rise this morning and enter into this debate on what is a very important topic, and I'd like to thank the member from The Battlefords for raising this as an issue. I appreciated the member from The Battlefords providing us with a reminder of the work that went into the committee that the government side had created a year or so ago, and the report that came out of it. I had the opportunity — unfortunately not the opportunity to be on the committee — but I did have the opportunity to review the document after it had been tabled and appreciate the member providing us with some further details around the recommendations and the responses that the government has done so far.

I do remember that day quite well when the report was tabled because around that time, if not the same day, was when the government announced the protection and response team as the big initiative that flowed out of this report, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was brought in with quite a bit of fanfare and has been from . . . I know the member would not likely agree with me as he hasn't agreed with me in his remarks. It's been actually met with mixed results, from what I've heard in talking to stakeholders across the province, Mr. Speaker.

What ultimately happened with the protection and response team was essentially, for the most part, already existing resources had been moved around with more onus being put, or more obligations being put, on groups that are already doing really important work. And in particular I'm thinking of the conservation officers and the commercial vehicle inspection individuals who, as a result of this initiative have . . . well for the commercial vehicle inspectors, they're now armed and they now respond to police-related calls that perhaps they hadn't responded to before.

In particular with respect to the cities, this has impacted the cities, as it's pulled some resources away from policing within those jurisdictions and moved their radius of the amount of land, I suppose is the best way to describe it, that they have to cover. So their radius outside of the city is much larger than it was before, which pulls resources away from our cities, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So although it is important to ensure that we are addressing rural crime, we do also have to not do that at the expense of crime in the cities, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I have heard that as a concern that I want to raise that because I have been speaking with a lot of stakeholders both within police, within the justice sector, and from talking to delegates at both SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] and within SUMA and SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When you hear people talk and when you hear those who were impacted by crime rurally speak about this as an issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they often talk about the root causes of the crime and their frustration with the lack of ability to really deal with that. Often the crime rurally is transient in nature, so the individual who's causing the crime in one location may not be from that particular location. So it's more difficult for a community to address that as an issue.

So while it is important to make sure that we, from a rural perspective, have the resources in place to be able to address calls

for service in a very timely manner, a lot of that rests on the RCMP and the problems that have been arising within the RCMP federally and their challenges that I understand they've been having around recruitment and retention, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And you see that it's impacting our rural communities in a very serious way. I have several friends who work within the RCMP, some of whom are in Saskatchewan. And they often talk about how it's difficult to be able to take leave, to go on holidays, or even take a sick day because there's no one else to be on call. Or even if they are on leave, they're the ones on call so you're never really off the clock, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I think that's impacting the work that they're able to do.

And from what I hear when I listen to those who live in the rural communities, they want to see their officers more in the community. They want to see them in the coffee shops. They want to see them speaking with those around them. And when they're so understaffed, it's really difficult for them to be able to do that work. So this is the crux of a problem that's flowing out of a larger issue, I think, with the RCMP federally.

Here provincially there's a lot that we can be doing. And I think that there were more initiatives that could have happened, that could have been applauded as the star initiative that flowed out of this report because there are some important recommendations in here that I think should have been highlighted instead of the protection and response team.

And in particular I want to highlight the last two recommendations in the government's own report, and that's recommendation 7:

We recommend that the Government of Saskatchewan work with the Federal Government to restore federal funding for a gang exit strategy and make it available across the province.

As well as recommendation 8:

We recommend that the Government of Saskatchewan explore expanding mental health and addictions treatment centres across the province. The Committee would also like to emphasize the importance of more timely access to these services to ensure a greater level of success.

And, Mr. Speaker, when I speak with police and I ask them what their number one pressure is, they unequivocally tell me that it's mental health calls. And the member spoke a little bit about this at the end of his speech and talked a bit about the PACT teams that have recently been formed and the benefit that that is having on communities in reducing police expenses in terms of the time they have to spend addressing a mental health call, the time they spend waiting in the ER [emergency room] to discharge someone that they've brought in. This is a real positive impact and I am happy to see that the PACT team has been started.

This to me should have been the star initiative that flowed out of this report because when I talk to police and I ask them what their pressure is, this is the pressure that they tell me that they're faced with the most, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I do urge government to, when considering where to allocate resources especially within this area, that actually dollars saved in terms of amount of police

resources would negate the costs of expanding these PACT teams and allowing for them to go beyond the jurisdictions that they're there now, because they are beneficial and they are helpful.

The other recommendation was with respect to gang exit strategies. Speaking with my colleague, the member from Elphinstone, who speaks very passionately about this topic and the importance of anti-gang programs and gang exit strategies in particular as it affects his constituency, he's lamented the cuts that have happened over the last decade around gang exit programs and anti-gang initiatives and the impact that that has had on his communities.

Well we are seeing — from what I understand, and correct me if I'm wrong — a bit of a reduction in crime right now. We are seeing an increase in violent crime, gun-related crime, and crime that involves gangs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So that's why it's very important to ensure that when we're allocating resources, that we look at the importance of ensuring that we're putting dollars into programming for gang exit strategies and for anti-gang initiatives.

[11:15]

This again should have been . . . was a great opportunity for the government when tabling this report: instead of highlighting the protection and response team, to highlight work that the government could have done and hopefully will do in the future in terms of helping gang exit strategies, anti-gang initiatives. In particular I'm thinking of STR8 UP who does really great work in Saskatoon in terms of anti-gang initiatives and gang exit strategies in particular. And I know they've had struggles with their funding.

We ask non-profits to do more and more with less. That can be very frustrating for groups like that that are providing what is a very crucial service that ends up helping us save money in the future, if you want to be harsh about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If you want to talk about the economics of it, we spend less on the justice system and the corrections system which is continuing to rise when we're addressing these root causes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I do appreciate the time to talk about this very important issue.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's nice to stand up today and to recognize this government's investment in innovative programs that reduce rural crime in Saskatchewan and to help protect the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was fortunate enough to sit on the crime reduction committee with my colleague from The Battlefords, and there were seven MLAs and the MLA from Battlefords chaired it, along with myself and the others. And Mr. Speaker was there on tour with us too as well to get a clearer picture on the issues in the province.

And I will say that we toured . . . Our committee sent out over 300 invites to the stakeholders across Saskatchewan and we toured over 10 communities across the province and met with over 60 stakeholders and also took some written submissions.

And I would also say that we gained a clearer picture of what was going on across the province.

In fact, our Mr. Speaker, who is not here today, he actually became kind of a cattle-rustling expert along the way as we went and toured around the province. Yes, we met in Estevan, Regina, Swift Current, Meadow Lake, North Battleford, P.A. [Prince Albert], Saskatoon, La Loche, and La Ronge. In those meetings across the province we found that there were some common themes and causes for crimes across Saskatchewan, whether it was rural or urban. There was property crime, drug trafficking, gangs, domestic violence, and many, many other things.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in February of 2017 our committee wrapped up our report and study and came out with eight common themes that were major issues that needed to be looked at across the province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in August of 2017 the minister announced the creation of the PRT, the protection and response team. This is a newly formed group to help us reduce the crime in rural Saskatchewan. The investment from the government is \$5.9 million. It was comprised of 258 armed enforcement officers; 60 police positions deployed to the CTSS, combined traffic service Saskatchewan; 30 new police positions funded through the SGI at a cost of \$4.9 million; 30 repurposed police positions as well; 40 highway patrol officers with expanded powers were brought in; and the 98 conservation officers with expanded services to help response times, visibility, presence, and also to help with drug and traffic enforcements on the highways.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, since launching, our COs have helped respond to over 1,500 actions and 113 emergency calls, including erratic driving, vehicle thefts, break and enters, firearm complaints, domestic violence, impaired driving, and also school threats.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2018 there was a permanent CRT, crime reduction teams, were formed. The cost is approximately 1.6 million. There are two based in North Battleford and Prince Albert. These teams also assist with hot spots across the province where the crime is hot, and they have also executed 137 arrests, 176 warrants, 59 new criminal code issues, 83 new provincial offence charges, 51 licence checks, and over 1,200 traffic stops.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in January of 2017 PACT was formed, police and crisis team, in Regina and Saskatoon. And just lately in '18-19 PACT was expanded to P.A., Yorkton, Moose Jaw, and North Battleford. These teams do home calls that are targeted at home and community care, mental health, and addictions. There have been over 1,800 PACT interventions in Saskatoon alone, of which 320 would have probably ended up in our emergency care. In Regina over 1,280 PACT calls were called and over 358 were kept out of the emergency department. And since the other four cities have started, they've also helped out with people and keeping them out of their emergency services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're also changing programs and bills in order to help with crime reduction. In 2014 our government worked with SUMA and SARM to implement the community safety program, allowing communities to hire a special constable to help out with community issues and support local policing. There are 11 communities and 32 trained CSOs [community safety officer] to date. There are eight CSOs at the Peter

Ballantyne Cree Nation and eight at the Little Pine and Poundmaker Cree Nation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2018 we brought in a police amendment Act in 2018. Bill 149 creates a revised regional policing allowing flexibility to let communities and municipalities with populations under 500 to join a regional police service. This allows for smaller areas to work together to have better care, presence, and visibility.

Mr. Speaker, in 2014 this government implemented a combined traffic safety service. This is a partnership between the police, the RCMP and the local police detachments to help combat against distracted drivers, impaired drivers, both in urban and rural Saskatchewan. This program was also recently expanded into Regina, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert. Mr. Speaker, we are also continuing to work with urban and rural to help increasing presence, visibility, and reducing crime.

We brought in Clare's Law. Now we are in the midst of passing a trespassing law that will help address the problem between rural landowners and members of the public. Mr. Deputy Speaker, landowners need to help prevent crop diseases and noxious weeds like clubroot. This will also help the RCMP to help end break-ins. This trespassing legislation has had public consultation and over two-thirds of the 1,600 responses are in favour of these changes.

Mr. Speaker, over the years our government has committed to safety of people of our Saskatchewan. We are increasing funding programs to battle rural crime and help with policing. We have increased the RCMP funding in provincial policy services by 21 per cent, or 31 million since 2011, and we have hired an additional 192 officers since 2011, an increase of 24 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all these increases are contrary to what the member from Regina Rosemont said yesterday when he said that we were showing decreases. And yes, our government knows that there is still more to do, but we are working in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, we are working to reduce crime. We currently have 1,089 RCMP officers in position in province — 866 on the front line and 126 on-reserve for the First Nations policing program. We are also doing initiatives and programs to help with the . . . We've put in the protect and response team, the community safety officer programs, crime reduction teams, combined safety services, Rural Crime Watch, and Citizens on Patrol.

Mr. Speaker, over the last two years of serving on crime reduction committee, I met with various groups in my constituency, in Norquay, Canora, Kamsack, and Preeceville. And, you know, I'd tell you that through some of the experiences, you know, the COs have helped out with being first responders and the visibility's improved and the break-ins are down around the Norquay area and that, and people are happy with the trespassing law.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to tell you that there is more work to do, but the people are happy with the efforts and the progress that we are making on crime reduction safety in our province. Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion by the MLA from The Battlefords and I would thank everybody for their work in

helping reduce crime. Thank you.

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

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I like to give credit where credit is due, and so there are times occasionally when I will give credit to the government for doing some good work. But you know, Mr. Speaker, I just happened to read the *Caucus Committee on Crime Reduction Report* that was a committee of the government caucus that toured around Saskatchewan that the members opposite have referred to. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it makes me mad because when I think of . . . It took me several pages into that report before there was even any mention of the root causes of crime.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I look at this report, I think you would have to be intentionally obtuse to ignore the causes of crime the way that this committee did. Thankfully, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by the time we got to, let me just see here, page 4 of the report finally there's a brief mention that drugs, gangs, and violent crime are more prevalent in rural parts of the province — the first mention of root causes of crime. And then when we get onto page 6, then we start talking a little bit about root causes, although they're not actually acknowledging that they're root causes. They're just talking about having heard that from consultations with First Nations community.

So what do we see on page 6 of the report? There is an acknowledgement that high rates of drug and alcohol abuse have led to increased crime, lack of employment opportunities, youth not attending school, lack of activities and after school programming, a loss of cultural and self-identity on First Nations which also leads to depression and other mental health issues. So there's some really important issues that are root causes of crime, and yet do they show up in the recommendations at all? They don't show up in the recommendations in the report.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to ask the government: what have they done to address high rates of drug and alcohol abuse on- and off-reserve in rural Saskatchewan? What has the government done? Where are these innovative action to address lack of employment opportunities in rural Saskatchewan, especially on-reserve? What has the government done to address education and programming for youths on-reserve? What has this government done to address the First Nations loss of cultural and self-identity, and mental health on- and off-reserve in rural Saskatchewan? Those are important questions, and what I'm seeing is a complete lack of innovative approaches to deal with those problems, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[11:30]

So I have to admit I wasn't really fired up until I happened to read this report. But this report is intentionally obtuse. When you talk to experts, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on crime . . . Let's listen to what retired police chief Clive Weighill had to say on addressing crime:

We have to put money into housing, we have to put money into jobs, we have to put money into education . . ."

is what he said.

Or here's another one, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

Almost everyone that is involved in a crime, to a T, has either got a drug addiction problem, an alcohol problem, or mental health issue [period]. Almost all the time. Those are the things we have to work on.

Or how about this one, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

We have to really get serious about some of the social issues that are impacting a huge, marginalized population here. Poverty, poor housing, racism, getting left behind.

Or how about this one, Mr. Deputy Speaker: "Crystal meth. It's changing people. It makes people become violent."

What are the innovative approaches that this government is doing to address those problems, Mr. Deputy Speaker? This isn't about police. Police don't prevent crime. Police respond to crime. The crime has already happened before the police get involved and that's . . . So if you want to reduce crime, you've got to start at the foundation of the pyramid, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now another thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I grew up in rural Saskatchewan, spent the first 20 years of my life there, and at the time I was growing up, impaired driving was a big problem in rural Saskatchewan. There was a culture, a cultural problem in rural Saskatchewan when it comes to impaired driving. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, nothing disappoints me more than driving back into rural Saskatchewan, into my community and other communities around the province, and I've been to a lot of them, and seeing beer bottles sticking out of the snow at signposts or in the ditches. And it tells me that we've done very little in this province to address the cultural problem, the cultural acceptability of impaired driving in rural Saskatchewan.

I know there's members on the other side who have experience with this. They know what I'm talking about. And so I'd like to know, what are the innovative approaches to address impaired driving in rural Saskatchewan, to address that culture of acceptability? I know that we've had some stiffer sentences and some stiffer penalties on impaired driving, and I think that's really made a difference in urban areas where it's easier to enforce, but in rural Saskatchewan, what has this government . . . Where is the innovative approach to address that culture of acceptability of impaired driving? That is missing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We still have the highest rates of impaired driving in this province across the entire country, and that's unacceptable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another expert who deals with crime and preventing crime on a daily basis, our own chief of police here in Regina, what does he have to say on this issue?

Let's work with addictions, let's work with social services . . . education, health. That improves the health and safety of our community if we can provide a holistic, social justice view of things, rather than always catching the bad guy, locking them up.

That is how you prevent crime, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I'm not saying that police aren't important. Police are a very important part. They do good work. They do the best they can with the resources that are allocated to them. There will always

be a role for police but that's not the solution. It's not the solution.

Studies after studies . . . I don't need to tell the members opposite how sparsely we're populated in rural Saskatchewan. We will never have a high enough police presence in rural Saskatchewan that they will be so visible as to deter crime. That's not the way that crime is prevented.

So lastly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I would like to refer to is the ugly undercurrent when it comes to talking about crime in rural Saskatchewan, which is that this is very much a racial issue. And we know that there's a higher prevalence of . . . We know that our First Nations and indigenous populations are greatly overrepresented in the criminal justice system. The report that the caucus committee did noted high tension between rural communities and First Nations communities. They noted a lack of communication between those communities and assumptions by both communities, causing tension to grow.

So I'd like to know where's the innovative approach to addressing that. What has the government done to address those divisions between those communities in rural Saskatchewan? Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

Mr. Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to stand before you today and speak about some of the steps our government is taking towards rural crime reduction.

The presence of crime in rural communities can severely impair quality of life for individuals, families, as well as hindering local businesses. Mr. Speaker, our government continues to protect the people of Saskatchewan and ensures that people feel safe. I was on the crime reduction committee for a few years and the committee travelled across Saskatchewan . . . [inaudible] . . . and other organizations. Our committee felt we needed . . . [inaudible] . . . dialogue to provide strong links with stakeholders across the province. Mr. Speaker, it also provided strategic advice to government and suggested plans to implement results.

Our tour of rural Saskatchewan helped to identify priority issues related to rural crime and abuse by developing and implementing an action plan. By engaging with many different agencies, we were able to identify how we can better support the use of effective rural crime prevention and reduction approaches, building better relationships among stakeholders, and advance a common culture that values and uses data to help and make decisions to better our communities.

Mr. Speaker, we collectively gathered information and listened to what the major issues were to determine what we can do better to address some of these issues. Effective engagement can enhance the ability for communities to identify and respond to crime by building on strengths and assets, including knowledge of what works to prevent and reduce crime. Some of the areas of concern were guns, drugs, gang activity, human trafficking, and rising property crimes, along within rural communities. Mr. Speaker, there are many regional and provincial targeted initiatives and programs that are aimed to keep youth in schools, reduce poverty, preventing and treating addictions, and improving access to service. These initiatives also support and

prevent crime because of target risk and protective factors. When engaged and managed effectively, these activities will be important components to help prevent rural crime.

These programs will also provide an opportunity to build on strengths and increase the focus on preventing and reducing crime through approaches that help our communities become stronger in the long term. It was noted, and understandably, that the economic growth, there is a level of crime that will occur. We know the crime reduction strategy is more likely to place greater impacts on measures to contain and reduce existing criminal activities. In turn it is a step in the right direction to eliminating and preventing opportunities and conditions that enable crime before it happens.

In 2018 the government implemented the crime reduction team, providing the RCMP approximately 1.6 million to help expand the team to North Battleford and Prince Albert. The CRT conducts targeted enforcement based on intelligence studies and crime trends, and is capable in assisting in responses to rural crime when it is reported. They are flexible and respond in a timely fashion.

In 2018-2019 alone the government budgeted 176 million to the RCMP policing service, approximately 91 million providing policing to rural municipalities and smaller urban communities with a population under 500.

Our government understands that rural crime prevention is the key component of community recruitment. Strong community partnerships are established an essential element of any crime reduction strategy. When we educate and support our communities, we help the people to be more aware to their own safety and to be proactive in the reduction of crime. I applaud this government for developing and applying protocols that deliver plans to identify these needs of the province. We help inform and keep our province strong and safe. Developing strategies that help to identify diverse geographic areas and changing demographics and the openness of the province are useful to help with preventing crime.

Mr. Speaker, the security and safety of the people of Saskatchewan, no matter where they live, will always be the priority for the members on this side of the House. To combat rural crime, our government is making a smart investment as it committed to increasing the number of officers in our province. Our government has increased funding to the RCMP provincial policy services by 21 per cent, over \$31 million since 2012, allowing the RCMP to hire an additional 192 officers since 2011, an increase of 24 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, currently Saskatchewan has 1,809 RCMP officers across the province: 866 of them positions are on front lines, 126 RCMP on-reserve positions throughout the First Nations policing program. Mr. Speaker, our government has also targeted resources and programs to help improve policing efforts in rural Saskatchewan: the protection and response team, 250 officers, community safety officers, crime reduction team, and combined traffic safety services.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, our government supports the expansion of rural crime watches across the province and introduced the police regional policing amendment, which will allow

municipalities and rural municipalities within a population of under 500 to join together to support regional policing services.

Mr. Speaker, we know there is still more work to do. We will continue to work to improve rural policing in our province, ensure that Saskatchewan citizens are getting policing services they need.

Mr. Speaker, in 2017 our government announced a new program to aid in reduction of crime in rural Saskatchewan: the protection and response team, utilized in policing to improve policing response to emergency calls for services, including property crimes that are in progress; enhancing uniform visibility and presence in our community; increasing enforcement dealing with drug trafficking on our Saskatchewan roads; and helping to enhance the safety of our roads by reducing the number of serious collisions and fatalities.

Mr. Speaker, the . . . [inaudible] . . . response teams currently has is 258 armed enforcement officers consisting of 60 police positions currently deployed to combined traffic services in Saskatchewan's initiative; 30 new police officer positions to be funded through SGI's \$4.9 million investment; 30 police positions currently funded by Ministry of Corrections and Policing; 40 Ministry of Highways commercial vehicles enforced by officers with expanding powers; 98 Ministry of Environment conservative officers.

[11:45]

Mr. Speaker, this government has made the great effort to provide communities with the tools to build a better and safer community. When we are able to take action without fear, we empower individuals to help and enhance and maintain and develop communities which is safe to live. The responsibility regarding the rules of trespassing for the rural landowners to the individuals seeking access to their property forces those to which the access land requirement possession required to . . .

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting today's motion and we will show year after year that rural Saskatchewan is a major priority of our government, and their families and communities will be able to sleep well knowing that we are making initiative investments to make and protect them, ensure that . . .

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and enter into this debate. It's no secret that I will not be supporting the motion that is put forward by the member from The Battlefords. So I'll identify that right now and say that in my short time here, I will make four different points that outline the reason for that. The first is that a narrow approach to crime doesn't work. The second is that we need to address the root causes of crime. Third, we need to be evidence-based in our approach. And fourth, we need to properly consult with indigenous peoples of this province, and that is an important piece that we need to make sure is included in these discussions.

So on the first point that a narrow approach does not work, I frankly find it quite astonishing that the member from The Battlefords would be moving this motion, which is sort of a

self-congratulatory motion to pat government on the back, when North Battleford is the city with the highest crime rate in Canada. And this individual should be putting forward some information about that community as well, in addition to talking about the rural areas.

And what we have seen in this community is that the more resources that are put into the back end, the more the crime rate still goes up or remains stagnant. So we know that the *Maclean's* . . . Again *Maclean's* magazine released its list of Canada's most dangerous places and that North Battleford remained at the top of that list. This is even though North Battleford's RCMP has doubled over the past 10 years. The crime rate has still increased.

At the same time there's been minimal investment from government into post-secondary education in the area despite having a large, young, employable population. We know that even the mayor of North Battleford has called for provincial help for people struggling with mental health and addictions and has pointed to how this is a missing piece of the equation. This situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, demonstrates that a narrow approach to crime that focuses on back-end initiatives will not work. We have an example right in that member's constituency.

Second, we need to address the root causes of crime. Many of my colleagues have called it the root causes of crime. In sociology they call it the social determinants of crime. We can call it the social causes of crime. Folks have been studying crime, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for nearly 200 years and they've learned a lot in that period of time.

Sometimes that means when we're looking for an answer, we need to go beyond what the obvious answer is. But the Sask Party government has ignored the root causes. We're talking about making real investments in the addictions to crystal meth that are running rampant across this province; into opioids, which are having a fatal effect across this province; mental health and education, we know being a central root cause of crime as well. We can't continue this austerity approach where we claw back these crucial investments away from our communities. We've seen what the result is of that approach.

We don't see the government investing in programming for anti-gang strategies. We know that community is doing that work, putting forward those initiatives. But they're not seeing the support coming from this government, and that is a central piece to this puzzle as well.

Indeed tackling the root causes of crime is what police chiefs across the province have been calling for, we've seen mayors calling for. My colleague from Regina Northeast was providing so eloquently some of the quotations that demonstrate the calls that have been made in this area that demonstrate that simply adding more policing is not the answer.

Third, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do understand that this government has been known to provide some consultations in this area. I did appreciate what the members opposite were providing in terms of the information they did in the consultations as they result to crime. And I know they've been . . . I know that we even know them to conduct the odd online survey to guide their actions. And all of this is good, important work, but this work is also too important to be left to perceptions and gut feeling. And we know

that consultations are important, but there is also, as I've said, nearly 200 years of evidence on what works in terms of crime. And I have serious questions about how that information has fed into this and how this public policy is being made.

It's important to be evidence-based in our approach when it appears that the Sask Party government is making decisions based on perceptions. So let's look at what the perceptions of crime are versus the reality. And what I want to be clear about here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that I want my government to be making the best decisions when it comes to policy for this province.

In 2016-2017 Saskatchewan saw a 6 per cent decrease in our crime severity index, and the overall crime rate has actually went down by 4.3 per cent, so a decrease in the crime rate, a decrease in the crime severity index. And I know there are some outliers, and there are regions in particular where we've seen crime go up. North Battleford is one of those areas. The North is also one of those areas, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I think we need to be very clear about what those rates look like in our province versus what the perceptions are.

There's a very useful report that I found put out through the University of Saskatchewan in 2014 by Dr. Jewell. It's called *Perceptions of Crime, Feelings of Safety, and Experiences of Victimization in Saskatchewan Jurisdictions Policed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police*. There are a number of things that I'd like to bring forward about this report but I'll have to be as brief as possible in the time that I have remaining.

They conducted telephone interviews with a random sample. As someone with a social science background, we know that that is important. They got a good response rate. They found that most respondents perceived of crime rates to either have remained the same or to have increased, so we're learning here that perceptions don't match what's happening with the crime rates.

This is not congruent with declining trends observed in official crime statistics, and overall approximately 79 per cent of respondents indicated they were satisfied with policing in Saskatchewan. The vast majority of respondents felt safe in their communities — 94 per cent — and in their own homes after dark, and also walking alone in their own communities after dark. Approximately 90 per cent of respondents were satisfied with their level of personal safety from crime.

So they concluded, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that perceptions of crime and safety in Saskatchewan did not necessarily mirror decreases in official crime rates that had been observed. Individuals who were female, Aboriginal, living on reserve or living in the North district were most often identified as experiencing more crime and victimization from their counterparts. Thus the survey suggests that special efforts need to be made to reduce fear and victimization among these populations.

So we're talking about in this report, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how we need to be reducing fear, not looking for opportunities to stoke fear. We need to be reducing fear. We need to be acknowledging the fact that crime rates are going down, and we also know that people generally feel safe in their communities. And this is a robust study, so I wanted to bring it to the attention

here of this Assembly.

Fourth, I want to quickly identify that indigenous folks in this province feel like they have been left out of this equation. There are serious questions that have been raised about consultation with indigenous peoples. The FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations] has been outspoken about concerns with arming conservation officers and the limitations of the trespassing legislation, and we've heard concerns about this rhetoric stoking racial divisions across our province and creating and deepening divisions.

Mr. Speaker, these are some very serious concerns that we have with how this motion is congratulating the Sask Party government on going forward with this type of report, where we know that we need to be focused on the root causes. We know that a narrow approach to crime does not work. We've seen it evidenced in the member from The Battlefords' own constituency.

We need to be evidence-based in our approach, not simply asking people what they think, although that's a good part of the equation is to consult with folks. But we really need to be guided by evidence when we're making public policy. And this is a key piece to the equation for me. We need to be guided by public . . . We need to be guided by evidence.

And we also need to make sure that we are properly consulting with indigenous peoples across this province, not stoking fears, not stoking a racial divide in our province, but instead looking at ways that we can come together and move toward real reconciliation. I will submit that the bills that are before this Assembly right now, and the overall actions that are being taken are not put forward with that same ideal in mind in terms of an end state.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I cannot support the motion that's been put forward by the member from The Battlefords.

The Deputy Speaker: — Time for debate has expired. Questions. I recognize the member from Regina Northeast.

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, rural crime is a serious issue in this province and unfortunately issues like education, poverty, addictions, and mental health have been neglected by the Sask Party government and has made the situation worse.

So my question to the member from The Battlefords is: does he acknowledge, does he understand that root causes like poverty, addictions, mental health are a significant contributor to rural crime?

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

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member opposite, thank you for the question. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, in this House I don't know whether it's my microphone that's not working or maybe the receiver for Regina Northeast.

But we talked at great length about some of the work that we're doing with our community recovery teams, how they're

providing much-needed assistance to taking a holistic and responsive approach to care for people. And this is a multidisciplinary team made up of several social workers. We are addressing these programs. We are working to do whatever we can.

But unfortunately, I guess we don't have a magical orange wand that we can make all of this go away at once. But we're going to continue to work. And I would say, to the members opposite, stay tuned, stay watching. There's going to be more announcements coming forward in the future as we work to make Saskatchewan a safer place. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP repeatedly state they will do politics differently, but all we have heard from the opposition are half-baked, boneheaded ideas and no real plan, especially, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to reducing rural crime rates. There was no mention of rural municipalities in the Leader of the Opposition's 2018 leadership campaign platform.

It is no secret that the NDP has a very detached relationship with rural constituencies, and they continually fail to make the needs of rural municipalities a priority for their party. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the member from Saskatoon Fairview. When will your party stop ignoring the hard-working people of rural Saskatchewan?

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before we get to this, I would like to ask the member to withdraw his comment. I believe "boneheaded" is unparliamentary language.

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Ask your question.

Ms. Mowat: — It appears the time for the apologies is later, so we'll let that happen later, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the attempt to distract from the matter at hand and what we're talking about right now, but we have serious concerns on this side of the House about the way these initiatives were approached. We are raising those concerns. We are raising concerns about the root causes of poverty. We are taking this incredibly seriously on this side of the House. We would appreciate if members opposite would do the same.

[12:00]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Hon. Ms. Wilson: — As we've seen today, the members opposite are out of touch with the province of Saskatchewan. We all agree that rural crime is a pressing issue in Saskatchewan. It is this government who has made concrete action to reduce crime

and make strides to keep our communities safe. The members opposite stand behind the leader who did not even pledge one dollar towards rural citizens and the crime rates.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from Regina Northeast. How can you justify standing behind a leader who has left rural Saskatchewan out of his plans?

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

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to comment on this question because our leader is the author of a book called *A Healthy Society* in which he talks about the root causes of what keeps people healthy, which coincidentally are also the root causes of what prevent crime. So now I note that the member was asking about the money that our leader was prepared to spend. Well guess what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We're in opposition; we don't get to spend money. But we are firmly committed to the idea of addressing the root causes of crime and poor health in this province.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm curious about the research that the caucus committee did in this work. Did they review the current crime stats and weigh the evidence into their decision? Or was the report entirely formed based on perceptions of folks that they talked to? To the member from The Battlefords: do you think this is a sound way to make public policy?

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

Mr. Cox: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and in answer to the question, I think that in order to form ideas of what's going on in our province we went about this in 100 per cent the right way. We sent invitations and notices to over 300 individuals, businesses, government officials, all across this province. We made ourselves available. We had an online contact point. Everyone that had issues with crime themselves or issues concerned with crimes in their area had an opportunity to speak to this committee.

And we talked at length here this morning about some of the initiatives that we've taken to address what we heard with that committee. And I think going forward that's going to prove itself to be exactly the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In my constituency I have seen the support of many programs such as the crime and reduction team, PACT, and protection and response team. It has impacted my constituents in a positive way, making them feel safer and better protected. Though the members opposite claim to have done rural outreach recently, one question remains.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from Regina Douglas

Park. Why did the member opposite vote against these innovative programs that the people of Saskatchewan are now applauding?

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I speak to those in the rural community, they tell me that they're concerned about the growing levels of addictions in their communities, especially around crystal meth. Yet we have yet to see a crystal meth strategy from this government, which is a real shame.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the member from The Battlefords: what is the current status of the government's anti-gang strategy?

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

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And once again, thank you for the question. That's one of the things that we heard when we travelled around this community. And we did hear from the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations. We heard from various tribal councils around this province. And we also heard from individual bands that we met with in the various locations around the province as well as here in Regina and the city of Saskatoon.

We heard about gang problems, gang incidents. And I'm happy to say that we're continuing to look and to work with our federal government and to work with the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, working towards a gang exit strategy that will be effective in the future and hopefully will help a lot of our young people avoid getting into that gang situation. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Swift Current.

Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, we know the members opposite love to throw around buzzwords and instill fear into the people of Saskatchewan. The member for Saskatoon Fairview talked about reducing fear, but at the same time then accused the government of stoking racial divisions. Now furthermore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from Regina Northeast, in his remarks earlier this morning said there is a cultural problem in rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question is for the member from Regina Northeast. What exactly did he mean by there is a cultural problem in rural Saskatchewan?

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

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, simply using the words of an esteemed member from the other side, the former premier, the member from Swift Current, who himself talked about the culture of drinking and driving, impaired driving, in rural Saskatchewan. So that's what I was referring to, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And coming from rural Saskatchewan, I'm well familiar with that culture as well, and so are the members opposite.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, to the member from Canora-Pelly: if the Sask Party government is serious about addressing the root causes of crime, why has the government let its anti-poverty report sit on the shelf?

The Deputy Speaker: — Time is expired for the 75-minute debate. Why is the member from Regina Douglas Park on her feet?

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

The Deputy Speaker: — Point of order?

Ms. Sarauer: — Yes. Mr. Speaker, during the 75-minute debate, the member from Carrot River used the phrase “boneheaded,” which I think we can all agree is unparliamentary. I’d ask that you ask the member to withdraw and apologize for that statement.

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — I withdraw and apologize, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — Private members’ motions. Why is the member of Cannington on his feet?

Mr. D’Autremont: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I’d ask the member to briefly put his point of order.

Mr. D’Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, it’s common knowledge in this Assembly that we are not allowed to advertise products. We’re not allowed to have pop cans in here with labels on them. We’re not allowed to have coffee mugs, such as this, with any kind of commercial emblem. I would ask that the member for Regina Northwest withdraw the remarks of the commercial advertisement of his leader’s book.

The Deputy Speaker: — Well that is a bit of a unique point of order, but I don’t find it very well founded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ MOTIONS

Motion No. 2 — Inquiry Into the GTH Land Acquisition

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Ms. Sproule.]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Northeast.

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It’s my honour to participate in this debate here this afternoon. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we’ve heard lots in this House about the failings

of the process and some of the results of the government failings when it came to the GTH land acquisition. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at this situation, well what can we say in summary? Were rules and procedures bypassed? Check. Were Sask Party donors enriched? Check. Was there an RCMP investigation? Check.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Justice has on many occasions referred to the RCMP investigation of this matter, and many times I’ve heard the minister refer to the thousands of hours that the RCMP invested into investigating this matter.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a lawyer I know that the RCMP don’t waste their time investigating frivolous things. When they invest thousands of hours of investigation, there’s something there. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that when the police send things off to the Manitoba prosecutor’s office, they wouldn’t be wasting the Manitoba prosecutor’s time with something if there was no evidence.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that when the RCMP held, in the minister’s word, the unprecedented step of having a news conference to announce the results of their investigation, if the RCMP had found no evidence of wrongdoing they would have said so. They could have said so, and yet they didn’t.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at all those factors, what that leads us to is the inescapable conclusion that there was evidence of wrongdoing. Now, Mr. Speaker, we have . . . In this motion we’re calling for an inquiry into the GTH deal, something the government is resisting. But the minister likes to say that there’s nothing to hide, that everything’s been looked at. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if there’s nothing to hide, why not open the books? If there’s nothing to hide, why does this government keep preventing officials from testifying at committee? If there’s nothing to hide, why not have an inquiry that would clear the government of any wrongdoing?

And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we’re left with the inescapable conclusion that there is something to hide. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that’s a great concern in this matter, because when there’s something to hide, when there’s evidence of wrongdoing, that’s when we as members, when we as citizens ought to be concerned. And there needs to be an inquiry into this matter to clear the air.

Judicial inquiries are an unusual step but they’re needed to clear the air when there remains a whiff or a stench of improper exercise of governmental powers.

The auditor also looked into this matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the auditor also didn’t give this government a pass. The auditor didn’t conduct a forensic audit. The auditor made it quite clear that she had not conducted a forensic audit. And so what is needed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is an inquiry to look into this matter fully so that the public can be assured that things were done properly. And more importantly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if things weren’t done properly, that those processes, those rules, those procedures, will be fixed to make sure things like this don’t happen again.

It’s interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that before this House now we’re dealing with another scandal. Another scandal where, were

rules and procedures bypassed? Check. Another scandal where, were Sask Party donors enriched? Check. We haven't quite got to the RCMP investigation stage yet, but perhaps we'll get there. And that scandal of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is what happened, what is going on in Wascana Park right now.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's all kinds of evidence here that calls for a judicial inquiry into this matter, all kinds of evidence of wrongdoing. It's been all over the news media. I don't have to remind this Assembly of the plethora of evidence that is out there, that there's all kinds of fertile ground here for an inquiry. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that we adjourn debate.

[12:15]

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:16.]

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