



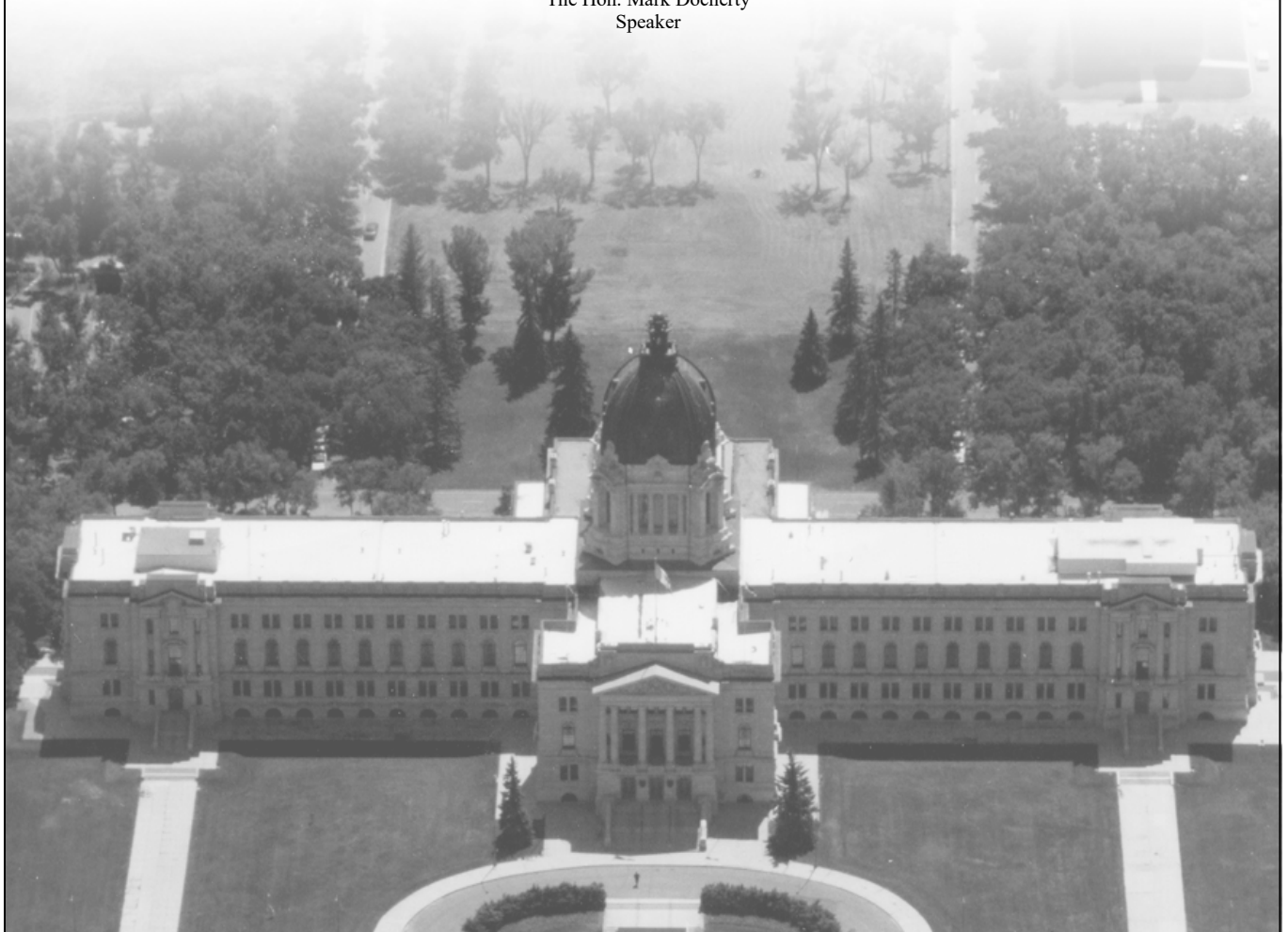
THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

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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Lawrence , Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)	

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

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through to all members of this Assembly, it brings me great pleasure to introduce some very special guests. Mr. Speaker, with us are four members of the Harris family, originating out of Shellbrook actually, who are long-time and active supporters of organ donation awareness in our province, Mr. Speaker.

This delegation includes Twyla Harris Naciri, Mr. Speaker — she is from Saskatoon — as well as Janelle and Camille Harris from Shellbrook. And they are under the watchful eye, so to ensure that they don't get into any trouble today, of their grandmother Opal Harris. Mr. Speaker, Opal lives in Prince Albert.

Our guests will be meeting with the Minister of Health in advance of National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, and I'm certain that they will discuss the province's new organ donor registry, Mr. Speaker. The Harris family have been strong advocates for the creation of this registry. And we're certainly grateful for their commitment to this important cause, Mr. Speaker, advocates for organ donation is something that has been very near and dear to the Harris family and a number of members of the Harris family. Most notably, we have Ralph, or as we know him, Skippy, waiting now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, every year the Harris family holds a special event to raise awareness of the importance of organ and tissue donations and also to honour family members who have passed while waiting for organ donations. This event is called Shoot for the Vitals. It's a 3-D [three-dimensional] archery shoot, Mr. Speaker, and the sixth annual event takes place this June 22nd and 23rd at Briarlea just outside of Prince Albert. Everyone is welcome.

Mr. Speaker, if you're unable to make it, you can still support the cause with a donation to a great cause. Mr. Speaker, all you have to do is visit the Shoot for the Vitals Facebook page. And I would like to, Mr. Speaker, thank the Harris family for everything they have done to shine the spotlight on the crucial issue of organ and tissue donations here in the province of Saskatchewan. And I would ask all members to join me in welcoming these four fine individuals to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join in with the Premier in welcoming the Harris family to their Legislative Assembly. I see Grandma Opal up there. Welcome to Opal Harris, Twyla, Camille, and Janelle, and I do want to thank them for the advocacy that they're doing. I'm going to say more in my member's statement, although I think the Premier said

quite a bit of what I'm going to say in my member's statement later this morning. But I do look forward to our meeting this afternoon, and I want to ask all members to join me in welcoming them.

But while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that when she isn't advocating for organ donation in this province, Twyla Naciri is also my constituency assistant. So I want to thank her for all of the work that she does in that capacity as well and ask all members to join me in welcoming her to her Assembly.

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

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

The Speaker: — The minister has asked leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Colleagues, in the Speaker's gallery, we have 23 public service employees seated. They're here today to take part in the parliamentary program for the public service.

The program includes a tour of the Legislative Building, briefings presented by various branches of the Legislative Assembly Service and Executive Council, and an opportunity to sit in the Speaker's gallery to observe question period and other House business. And later, after question period, the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre and I will be meeting with the group to answer any questions and clarify anything that may have happened in question period for them. I'm sure they'll be very, very interested. So it's always an interesting time when we review and reflect.

The participants are employees from the following ministries: Energy and Resources, Immigration and Career Training, Trade and Export Development, Health, Agriculture, Education, Environment, Government Relations, Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, and Highways and Infrastructure. I ask all colleagues in the House to help me welcome these visitors and thank them for the work that they do each and every day on behalf of all of us. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming these public servants to their Legislative Assembly. This is where all the briefing notes wind up — here they are all on display, I'm sure — and all the good work that you do. We do with it as best we can.

But, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say congratulations to the public servants that have come to take a greater interest to learn more about the political side of the very important work that they do on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. Because, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has a tremendous tradition when it comes to a

public service that punches well above its weight and is well regarded throughout the Commonwealth, Mr. Speaker. And certainly we ask so much of these men and women on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

So again, congratulations and thank you very much for all the work that you do to make this a better province, to serve the people. And I very much look forward to meeting with them later on, Mr. Speaker, and we'll see how it goes with the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

But with that, Mr. Speaker, I think you're giving me the high sign to, you know, cut it out. I'm not . . . Okay. All right, all right. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, again I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming these public servants to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and all members of the Legislative Assembly, in your gallery today I would like to welcome Second Vice-chief David Pratt, second vice-chief of FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations]. Vice-chief Pratt is an educator. He's originally from the Muscowpetung First Nation, and we would like to welcome Vice-chief Pratt to his Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join the minister in welcoming and recognizing Second Vice-chief Pratt. I first got to know David when he was at university and he was a leader in the Indigenous Students' Council and at ITEP [Indian Teacher Education Program] as he was doing his Bachelor of Education.

I watched him during his campaign for the FSIN vice-chief position, was so impressed with the work that he did and the way he reached out to communities, and have been extremely impressed by the role he's taken in advocating for child welfare. In his role as second vice-chief, that's one of his files, and he's truly passionate about making sure that the children, in particular of course First Nations children in this province, are safe and well taken care of. I'd ask all the members to join me in welcoming him and thanking him for his advocacy and his work.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of myself and also the member from Melfort who shares the new developing potash mine, I would like to welcome from BHP, Ms. Jackie Pilon. She is a specialist, corporate affairs and government relations for the company. I would like to welcome her to her legislature, and I hope she enjoys the proceedings.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to join with the member opposite to welcome Jackie Pilon to her Assembly. Certainly the investment made by BHP at the Jansen mine project is valued by Saskatchewan people. This is an important project to the province. It's a pleasure to have Jackie

in her Assembly here today on behalf of BHP.

And I also suspect around the Pilon household that the big win, sending the Penguins packing last night with the first round victory, was a bit of a big deal as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McCall: — Ah, Mr. Speaker, you're generous to a fault. Thank you very much for the recognizing, Mr. Speaker. Just very quickly I want to add my voice to those welcoming Vice-chief David Pratt from the FSIN to his Legislative Assembly here today.

And this is, I think, well known on both sides of the House, Mr. Speaker, and certainly by yourself that David comes from a family with a tremendous tradition of service to the people in so many different ways, Mr. Speaker. I think it was yourself, Mr. Speaker, I once heard at an event introduce the Pratts as sort of the Kennedys of Treaty 4 territory, such is the many and varied ways that they have served with distinction throughout Saskatchewan really, Mr. Speaker.

So again it's good to see Vice-chief David Pratt here today at his Legislative Assembly. I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming him and to say to him, gichi-miigwech.

The Speaker: — Okay. Well I'd like to welcome in the west gallery 25 grade 8 students from the Huda School in the constituency Regina Coronation Park. And with them is . . . They're accompanied by their teacher, Amber Learned Garritty. Give us a wave? After question period's done, I'll be taking some time to engage with these students. And they are exceptional students and certainly helping the diversity of this lovely city and province. I would like to welcome all of them to their Assembly.

While I'm on my feet, I'd also like to welcome Vice-chief David Pratt. I've been friends of your family for 30-some years. You are leaders. You've done nothing but drive forward initiatives in regards to and on behalf of people of Muscowpetung, on behalf of Indigenous populations of this province, and we're better with you as well. Thank you for your service, sir.

I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to join you in welcoming the students from the Huda School, and in particular Amber, who is a friend of mine from university. Hadn't seen you in a few years. Was a great surprise to see her today, and so happy to see her in the role she's in, helping guide this next generation. So welcome, Amber, and welcome, all the students from the Huda School. Thank you.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition from citizens who are opposed to the Justin Trudeau, Ralph Goodale, Liberal Party of Canada, job-killing, soul-sucking, unconstitutional,

non-emitting, supported-by-the-Saskatchewan-NDP [New Democratic Party] carbon tax. On April 1st, the Trudeau government slapped a carbon tax plus GST [goods and services tax] on fuel, power, and home heating, which will also drive up the cost of just about everything else. Unfortunately it was no April Fool's joke.

I'd like to read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the citizens of Moose Jaw, Regina, and Lumsden. I do so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to call for . . . a petition calling for a public inquiry and forensic audit into the Regina bypass land scandal. The people who've signed this petition have a number of points they'd like to bring to our attention, first being the land developers purchased 640 acres of land along Tower Road and then had the Regina bypass moved to accommodate their developments.

Thousands of people were impacted directly by this bypass. They lost their land, their homes, their businesses, access, life's work, health, history, and future. And, Mr. Speaker, a number of them are still in lawsuits with the government about these takings. Land developers ironically were paid up to 80 times more for their land than the long-term land, home, and business owners. The cost of the Regina bypass exploded from an initial 400 million to now well over \$2 billion.

[13:45]

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan call for a judicial public inquiry and forensic audit into the entire Regina bypass land scandal.

Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition today are from the cities of Regina and Saskatoon and the communities of Dundurn, Viscount, Asquith, and the city of Weyburn. 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. The undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan want to bring to our attention the following: that Saskatchewan's outdated election Act allows corporations, unions, and individuals, and even those living outside Saskatchewan to make unlimited donations to our province's political parties.

But, 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. But over the past 10 years the

Saskatchewan Party has received \$12.61 million in corporate donations, and of that, \$2.87 million came from companies outside Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan politics should belong to Saskatchewan people. And we know that the federal government and the provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and now British Columbia have moved to limit this influence and level the playing field by banning corporate and union donations to political parties.

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

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government 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, people signing this petition come from the city of Regina. I do so present. Thank you.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for critical workplace supports for survivors of domestic violence. Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing this petition today wish to bring to our attention the following: Saskatchewan has the highest rate of domestic violence amongst all the provinces in Canada; and Saskatchewan must do much more to protect survivors of domestic violence; and that five days of paid leave and up to 17 weeks of unpaid leave be made available to workers who are survivors of domestic violence.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call upon the Sask Party government to pass legislation to ensure critical supports in the workplace, including reasonable accommodation and paid and unpaid leave for survivors of domestic violence.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing this petition today come from Indian Head and Regina. I do so present.

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

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege today to rise to present a petition from some people from Paradise Hill and Lloydminster. Mr. Speaker, the petition is on the soul-sucking, supported-by-the-Sask Party seed regulations proposed by the Trudeau Liberals. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners want to bring to our attention that these proposals would give plant breeders total control over plant varieties registered after February 2015.

Mr. Speaker, the seed regulations that the federal government is proposing would enable seed companies to charge farmers a royalty on seed that the farmers themselves have grown and kept to reuse. Mr. Speaker, the proposals do not give farmers any

guarantee that royalties that they pay will be devoted to funding research; they don't provide any guarantee that the research would return the value of such research to farmers; and they don't provide any guarantee that the research would be on Canadian crop varieties.

Mr. Speaker, in the prayer the petitioners:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call upon the Saskatchewan Party government to advocate on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers with the federal government to ensure that the rights of farmers to freely use their own seed be established and maintained, that end-point royalties and trailing royalties will not be imposed on farmers, and that any seed research paid for by farmers will be controlled and directed by farmers.

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Stanley Mission Benefit Hockey Game

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, on Friday, January 25th I helped coach the local Stanley Mission Riverhawks hockey team with La Ronge Band Councillor Linda Charles and Chief Tammy Cook-Searson. We were coaching a benefit hockey game versus the PAGC Chiefs. There were many great passes, goals, even a couple of big hits by both clubs.

The PAGC Chiefs were led on the ice by Grand Chief Brian Hardlotte, who hails from Stanley Mission. He brought with him Saskatoon Police Chief Troy Cooper and other hockey players from the grand council. The PAGC Chiefs were coached by P.A. [Prince Albert] mayor Greg Dionne, Morley Watson, Bruce Morin, Chris Jobb. The arena was packed with elders, young hockey players, and community members. We even had guest MC [master of ceremonies] Emery Burninggrass announce the game.

The annual benefit hockey game always takes place before northern Saskatchewan's largest poker rally. This game ended with the PAGC Chiefs winning 6-5 over the local Stanley Mission Riverhawks. The coaches and players then gave speeches about the importance of minor hockey in our communities and how it has positive impacts. All youth who were present were given pucks and hockey sticks by the PAGC Chiefs, mayors, and other dignitaries. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Port of Raymond Restored to 24-Hour Schedule

Mr. Doke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was announced this morning that the Port of Raymond border crossing will be restoring its 24-hour schedule as of April 23rd. The US [United States] Customs and Border Protection previously made the decision to cut the hours of operation to four border crossings at Port of Raymond, Morgan, Scobey, and Opheim.

Mr. Speaker, the Port of Raymond border crossing is utilized not only by Montana residents but Saskatchewan residents on a daily basis. I attended four town hall meetings in Plentywood, Scobey, Glasgow, and Malta on behalf of the Premier and the Government of Saskatchewan and also as president of PNWER [Pacific NorthWest Economic Region]. I went to represent and support residents from Saskatchewan and also to show our support for Montana residents who rely on Port of Raymond for commerce and trade.

Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan exports more goods and services to the US than any other country. In 2018 alone, Saskatchewan exported \$1.3 billion of product to Montana out of the 17.3 billion Saskatchewan exports to the United States. Mr. Speaker, cutting access to the international border by any amount would have substantial impact on our trade activity. That is why I'm so pleased with this announcement that came this morning.

I would like to thank the Premier for his leadership and advocacy on this issue, as well as Senators Daines, Brennan, Tester, and Geofordy, and also to the residents of Saskatchewan and Montana for their unwavering resilience on this matter. Thank you.

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

Archery Shoot Raises Funds for Organ and Tissue Donations

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From April 21st to 27th, Canadians will be raising awareness about the critical need for more donors during National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week.

One of the families who is working to not only raise awareness but to help with the financial needs of those going through organ and tissue donation is the Harris family. The Harris family carries a gene mutation called dyskeratosis congenita, DKC, which is a rare genetic form of bone marrow failure and the inability of the marrow to produce sufficient blood cells. Because of DKC, the Harris family has a strong connection to organ and tissue donation.

Since 2014 the Harris family has held the annual Shoot for the Vitals 3-D Archery Shoot to raise money to help support those going through organ and tissue donation. This year it will be held on June 22nd and June 23rd on the Harris family farm in between Shellbrook and Prince Albert. Last year I attended this event and I plan to attend and participate this year and try my hand at archery.

The Harris family has donated \$15,000 over the last six years. I ask all members to join me in thanking the Harris family for their leadership and commitment when it comes to organ and tissue donation in this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Saskatchewan Athlete Excels at Badminton

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I stand to recognize a young constituent of mine, Wyatt Lightfoot.

Originally from Assiniboia, Wyatt is currently in grade 10 at Wilcox, at Notre Dame at Wilcox. Mr. Speaker, though Wyatt was born with a type of dwarfism called achondroplasia, he has never let it hold him back from pursuing a career in sports.

At the age of four, Wyatt fell in love with badminton. He joined the CrossCourt Badminton Club here in Regina and attended his first Canadian Para-Badminton National Tournament in Moncton in 2016, where he took gold. He was then asked to be a part of the first Canadian para-badminton national team and in 2017 and 2018 placed first for the second and third time at nationals. He was also awarded the National Para Junior Athlete 2017-2018 Athlete of the Year.

Now his sights are set on 2019, where he hopes to qualify for the 2020 Paralympics in Tokyo. To do so he must attend 14 tournaments by March 2020. Mr. Speaker, Wyatt is working tirelessly to train and fundraise for the chance to compete in Tokyo and represent his country, and we wish him all the best. I now ask that this Assembly please join me in congratulating Wyatt Lightfoot on his accomplishments in badminton. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

International Day of Pink Walk

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On April 10th I was honoured to host over 200 Girl Guides, their leaders, and parents for the 2019 Day of Pink walk. Their march began at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum and ended up right here on the steps of this Legislative Building. This annual march is a celebration of diversity and a chance to raise awareness to end bullying. Each year on the second Wednesday of April, millions of people across the world wear pink to take a stand against anyone who is bullying and to be supportive of those who have been bullied.

The Girl Guides of Canada provide a safe, all-girl environment that invites girls not only to challenge themselves, but to find their voices, meet new friends, and become the leaders in their schools and community. Their values are built on respect, which also supports the foundation of the Day of Pink.

Mr. Speaker, the girls marched together, determined to have their message of inclusion and anti-bullying for all Regina to hear. Their energy was inspiring and I know their message was loud and clear. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the volunteers, the Girl Guides, for coming out on International Day of Pink walk. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

A Night with STARS

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday I had the privilege to attend A Night with STARS fundraising gala that was held here in Regina along with my colleagues from Moose Jaw Wakamow, Indian Head-Milestone, Yorkton, and the member from Saskatoon Fairview as well.

At this year's event the keynote speaker and VIP, very important

patient, was Carol Brons. Carol is the mother to Dayna Brons, who was the athletic trainer for the Humboldt Broncos and was flown by STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service] on the night of the bus crash. Her words are powerful and serve as a great reminder of how crucial of a service STARS is, especially in our rural areas.

Mr. Speaker, this event also featured a new behind-the-scenes peek at what it's like to be part of the STARS flight crew. The helicopter was on site and we were invited to take a seat in the cockpit or learn from the pilots and expert medical teams in the back about how to conduct a mission and save lives.

Mr. Speaker, the support of fundraisers such as this helps keep STARS in the sky, ensuring they have the funds and tools to help the next patient who is in serious need. STARS has a budget of \$21 million and the Government of Saskatchewan provides half of that. The other half, the \$10.5 million, is raised through evenings such as last Friday.

All members would please join me in thanking STARS for their service to the people of Saskatchewan and to the sponsors, guests, and donors of A Night with STARS for their generosity to such an important cause to the people across our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Martensville.

Congratulations to Alberta's New Premier

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very proud to stand today to offer congratulations to Alberta's new Premier, Jason Kenney, and to the entire UCP [United Conservative Party] team.

I've known Jason for almost 20 years. I was able to work with him in Ottawa. He is a great guy with a big heart and he has a heart for Alberta. Jason is one of the hardest people I know, and it was obvious that he was a man on a mission. First up was to unite the PC [Progressive Conservative] and Wildrose parties. He knows what we do, that united we win. And the UCP did that last night.

While the NDP campaigned on fear, smear, and scare tactics, Jason and his team presented a plan for prosperity for Albertans. He knows what we do, that hope beats fear. And because he has Alberta's best interests at heart, he has stated that his first order of business will be to repeal the NDP's carbon tax.

Less than a year ago, Saskatchewan stood alone. We were the only province in the Dominion of Canada that was fighting against the Trudeau Liberals' carbon tax. Today we now have five provinces across this country representing 60 per cent of the population in this fight, and we welcome Alberta to the team.

Alberta now has a true champion of pipelines and energy sector. He won't be calling Alberta the embarrassing cousin that no one wants to talk about. He knows what we do, that when Western Canada prospers, our entire country benefits.

To Premier-elect Kenney: you have been tireless in your fight for a better Alberta. I know you will keep on that fight, and we look forward to working with you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[14:00]

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Number of First Nations Children in Care

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are joined today by Second Vice-chief David Pratt from the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations. He's been a tireless advocate for child welfare in this province, and he has pointed out the way that we have seen an increasing number of children in care.

There's maybe 25 per cent of the children in Saskatchewan that are Indigenous, but when you look at kids in care, that number is over 80 per cent. That overrepresentation is completely unfair. I asked the Minister of Social Services recently how many kids are in care today, and he said 3,200. But he missed an entire category of kids: non-ward children. There's over 2,000, which puts us at over 5,000 children in care — over 5,000 kids in this province today separated from their families, Mr. Speaker. And this number has been climbing over the last five years.

My question to the Premier is this: what's the plan? When are you going to get to work and decrease the number of kids in care, and in particular First Nations children in care?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for an important question, Mr. Speaker, and a priority for this government, Mr. Speaker, in the work that we do on behalf of our children, Mr. Speaker, notably and specifically our children that are in care here in this province, Mr. Speaker, and even more specifically those kids of First Nations ancestry, Mr. Speaker, that are in care.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to visit with Mr. Pratt and Mr. Cameron not too long ago, Mr. Speaker, to discuss some of the opportunities that we may have to work together in the near future, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we can improve on those numbers that we have, Mr. Speaker.

And I would point to the work of the Social Services minister that we have, Mr. Speaker, and the 17 child and family service agreements that he has across the province, Mr. Speaker — now increased with the most recent signing of a memorandum of understanding with the . . . a partnership agreement, Mr. Speaker, with the Saskatoon Tribal Council — to continue with this joint work with the FSIN, with the tribal councils across the province, the opportunities that we have to improve those opportunities for our next generation, Mr. Speaker, for all of our children in this province.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over a quarter of the children in this province live in poverty. When you look to on-reserve, that number climbs to about 60 per cent. And when we talk about kids in care, there's a rising number of kids in care and over 80 per cent of those are Indigenous children, Mr. Speaker.

A few years ago, in fact almost a decade ago, this government gave hope, gave hope to First Nations communities, to the FSIN, to communities all across the province when they promised a comprehensive review of the child welfare system in this province. And yet here we are, 2019, and nothing has happened. When will that review be performed? When will we see changes to this system?

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the member opposite for the question. I do have to reject the premise of the question, Mr. Speaker. We have done a lot with our First Nations partner, Mr. Speaker. Myself, previous Social Services ministers, Minister of Government Relations — we're out meeting with chief and council.

And just to correct the record, Mr. Speaker, I did say that there was 3,200 children in care. There are an additional 2,038 children that are actually in home supports, Mr. Speaker, in foster families or with persons of sufficient interest, Mr. Speaker, that are supported by Social Services. So I just want to make sure that the record's correct on that. We do have 3,200 children in care, Mr. Speaker, and we also have an additional 2,000 children that are in family settings, Mr. Speaker, that are supported by the Ministry of Social Services.

And I'm very proud, if I get another question, to talk about what we did with Saskatoon Tribal Council. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again First Nations and Métis children far overrepresented in our child welfare system, also overrepresented by an even higher number when you look at children who die or are critically injured while in care.

The system is broken, and it's been broken for years. And the Sask Party hasn't done the work to fix it despite promises to do otherwise. Vice-chief Pratt has been advocating and doing great work advocating for changes so the First Nations communities have more control over their connection to children, children in need in their communities.

Is the Premier ready to do the work? First Nations are ready to do the work. Is the Premier ready to do the work and work alongside the federal government and make sure that we implement the upcoming federal legislation? Or will he be working against the best interests of Saskatchewan children?

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm glad to report to the House that's exactly what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. We have a partnership agreement. This is the first time ever in Canada that we have a partnership with the Saskatoon Tribal Council, Mr. Speaker, that we are walking down this path together, Mr. Speaker, to be able to help the children in care. Tribal Chief Mark Arcand has been very supportive, as well as the seven chiefs that supported this, in a major signing with the Premier and myself just before budget time, Mr. Speaker.

We are extremely proud of the work that we're doing with the

delegation agreement, the partnership, and the first contact panel, Mr. Speaker, where again, if there is a child that is in need of care that is on- or off-reserve, we treat that child with the most respect, Mr. Speaker. We also make sure that that child has the opportunity to maintain contact with their culture, with their family, and with their community, and we'll continue to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Process Surrounding Apology for Sixties Scoop

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through freedom of information request we've received the report that the government commissioned from the Sixties Scoop Indigenous survivors society. Now the Premier was happy to stand up along with this group for an apology, but he hasn't followed through on any of the recommendations. And we can understand now why he didn't want that report to be public because we haven't seen any movement on following those recommendations.

The top recommendation was, and I'll quote, "create task force to find records," labelled high priority. This information is required by August 31st of 2019 for individuals to prove that they qualify for the federal class action settlement. If the files cannot be found, the government must explain what happened to them.

So my question for the Premier is, when will that task force be established? What's the plan to make sure that survivors have their records in good time so that they're eligible for that support?

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question on the Sixties Scoop. Mr. Speaker, we did have a very humble apology from our Premier in the rotunda of this building that we had with our Indigenous partners across Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

We were able to attend, as a caucus, every one of the events, the sharing circles, Mr. Speaker. We were there in person, Mr. Speaker, listening to the stories — not commenting, not questioning, just listening because that's what the Sixties group, survivors wanted us to do, Mr. Speaker. They wanted us to attend. And I'm glad to say, Mr. Speaker, that we attended all of those events. I didn't see anybody from the opposition sitting in a talking circle . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order please. Order. Order. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying that there was nobody actually from the opposition participating in a talking circle, Mr. Speaker. And all the tweets that we got from the Leader of the Opposition were extremely disrespectful of the whole process, Mr. Speaker. Our Premier stood tall in the rotunda and apologized on behalf of all governments in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — If the members want to engage in debate and join the questions, please stand up and be recognized. We go to go? I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, we would have loved to attend those events. They didn't invite us. Not only did they not invite us, not only did they not invite us, when members of the SSISS [Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Saskatchewan] encouraged us to come, they were criticized for doing so. That's the way this government played politics with that apology. It's offensive and it's wrong. They also didn't invite most of the First Nations leaders in this province to attend that apology.

It was a sham, Mr. Speaker. It was a weak apology. And it's so frustrating to see this government pretend that it was something more, especially when they asked that group, they asked the SSISS to provide a report to give them recommendations. They hid those recommendations and they proceeded with none of them.

So the question remains, Mr. Speaker, because we've heard nothing about it. And this question's for the Premier. He was willing to stand up and say that he would apologize. And he said they were going to do what they could. Well will they? Will they help families to reconnect, and will they help people to obtain their records? Will they establish the task force that SSISS has asked for to help people get their records by August 31st? And will they advocate for an extension of that deadline so that no one goes without the settlement that they deserve?

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, just for the record, this was not our event to invite people to. This was the Sixties group, survivor group that was an independent group that was formed by them, Mr. Speaker. We were invited as government officials to be able to participate in this event . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Enough. Listen to the questions. Listen to the answers. Let's get on with it. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Again for the record, we were invited as government officials and we participated. If they wanted to attend these events, as they said they weren't invited, they just had to check the internet, Mr. Speaker, and follow it online.

I believe most of the media was covering that. We had good coverage when we went up to Meadow Lake. When I participated in North Battleford, Saskatoon, and Regina we had a cabinet minister at every one of these events, Mr. Speaker, to do nothing but sit there and listen to the stories. We heard some very tragic stories and we also have heard some stories of triumph, Mr. Speaker.

So again, Mr. Speaker, this was not our event to invite people to. This was the Sixties Scoop survivor group event to be able to invite whoever they wanted, and I'm glad that this side of the House was able to participate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon

Fairview.

Access to Mifegymiso and Members' Views on Abortion

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if they've been listening since the apology happened.

Mr. Speaker, in 2012 the Premier created a new cabinet position, the Minister of Rural and Remote Health. That year, in his response to the Speech from the Throne, then minister responsible, the member for Biggar-Sask Valley, talked about "... unique issues that patients in rural areas face when it comes to receiving timely access to health care." He hit the nail on the head, Mr. Speaker. Rural health care is unique, and whether it's deliveries or access to specialists, the minister holding that position should be fighting tooth and nail to break down every barrier to care in rural communities.

Will the Minister of Rural and Remote Health agree that his publicly declared battle against women's reproductive rights isn't what he should be fighting for as a minister?

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

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, as I've said in this House many times, my job first and foremost is to represent everybody in this province fairly, and I believe I've done that. And I would state for the record that I believe I've done that for four and a half years, regardless of the issue, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to any kind of health care throughout this province I can again stand on my record. Whether it's doctor recruitment and retention, training of physicians in rural areas, nurses, any practitioner, whether it's diagnostic imaging, whether it's Telehealth and remote presence technology, any access to any service that we have in urban centres, we do our utmost to present them in rural and remote settings as well, Mr. Speaker. And our record does stand very strong, I believe.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, there remains serious questions about access to reproductive rights in rural and remote areas, and that is what we are here to ask questions on. We were among the last in the country to add the drug to our formulary and are the last to cover it. This disproportionately hurts women in remote areas and there's no two ways around it. Saskatchewan has been left in the dust when it comes to improving access.

Just yesterday the federal government announced ultrasounds would no longer be mandatory to access Mifegymiso, a step in the right direction. And here in Saskatchewan we're left wondering if women's barriers to access are related to conversations around the cabinet table between a minister and a premier who have publicly expressed their desire to claw back women's rights. That minister needs to go to restore public trust. Will the Premier do that today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

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

these are the exact same questions we answered last week and we answered earlier this week, Mr. Speaker. Abortion is legal in this country, Mr. Speaker. That's been established through the Supreme Court and the law of the land, Mr. Speaker. That ship has sailed. Those services are required to be available in Saskatchewan and they are, Mr. Speaker. That's our job to do that. We support that.

Mr. Speaker, as far as the drug Mifegymiso, it is available across the province, as I said many, many times in this Assembly. The only question left to answer is who's going to fund it. Is it going to continue to be funded by the province for our most vulnerable and low-income people, Mr. Speaker, or is it going to change to universal coverage? I've committed to a review being done to make that determination, Mr. Speaker. That should be done fairly shortly, Mr. Speaker, and we'll make the decision at that time.

[14:15]

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, by continuing to focus on taxpayer dollars, they're trying to signal that they're willing to block access when they know full well this will cost less.

The minister, the Premier, and the Rural and Remote Health minister have tied themselves in knots this week trying to sweep this under the rug, but it was the choices of that minister that got them into this position in the first place. The Premier said the minister crossed a small line, but it's anything but. His commitment to keep up the anti-abortion battle is the opposite of his mandate of improving access to healthcare for people in rural and remote areas.

The minister can't step back over that line. It's been crossed. And the Premier needs to show leadership and restore the confidence that has been lost as a result of this minister's actions. Will he commit to doing the right thing and shuffling that minister out of his portfolio today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again as I've said many times, Mr. Speaker, the only question left to answer is how this drug will be paid for, Mr. Speaker. I should point out, because of the tone of the member opposite's question, Mr. Speaker, saying that somehow the Minister of Rural and Remote Health has somehow blocked this or something, which is completely incorrect, Mr. Speaker.

I should point out that this minister — and I think I pointed this out the other day as well — this minister was in the current file when Mifegymiso was put on the formula, Mr. Speaker. In the time I've been in this file, three years, I've never seen him conduct himself inappropriately according to his beliefs, Mr. Speaker. We've been through this exact same issue many times over the last week or so.

Mr. Speaker, the review is being conducted by the ministry officials. As soon as that's done, we'll make a determination on the funding, which is the only question left to answer.

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

Mr. Meili: — The minister says we've been through this time and time again, and yet again the minister goes and crosses a line, Mr. Speaker. He crossed a line that is very serious, sends the wrong message to the public. And any minister worth his salt would have apologized, would have committed to advocate for full access to care, would have committed to no longer giving speeches at events like that, and would have committed to funding Mifegymiso right away. This minister did none of that.

So any premier worth his salt, when he sees a minister that won't do his job, would find a minister who would. When will he make that change?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — You know . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Would the member for Saskatoon Centre please come to order. I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, as I've said many times, the minister was in the current file when Mifegymiso was added to the formula. He hasn't blocked anything. Mr. Speaker, we're treating this as we would any other pharmaceutical, as we did a couple of years ago when we made the medication for HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] universal.

Mr. Speaker, we're treating this exactly the same way. I expect within a few weeks that we'll have the review done by the ministry. Mr. Speaker, we'll make a determination at that time.

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

Mr. Meili: — There's absolutely nothing preventing that minister from making the commitment today to cover it and make sure access is available for everyone. And there's absolutely nothing preventing the Minister for Rural and Remote Health finding his feet, apologizing, committing to advocating for full access, universal access to care, committing to no longer encouraging other groups to advocate against that work, and committing to funding Mifegymiso and working and doing his job. He will not do his job, Mr. Speaker. He wants others to speak for him. When will the Premier stand up and do his job and get a minister in place that will do the right thing?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I'm the lead minister on this file. It's a formulary issue, so I'm going to speak to it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is criticizing . . . The Leader of the Opposition is criticizing the Minister of Rural and Remote Health, saying that somehow he's inappropriately gerrymandering the process and holding it up or something, which is not true, Mr. Speaker. But what would he like instead? He stands up and says, throw the whole process out the window and approve it right now because I said so. Does that make any sense, Mr. Speaker? No, it doesn't.

You know, Mr. Speaker, for the last few weeks I've noticed a number of times — I think it started, I'm not sure, I think around budget time, Mr. Speaker — I'd be getting ready in the morning and I'd be watching TV. And I'd be watching the news and, Mr. Speaker, NDP ads were coming up. Those NDP ads were promoting the Leader of the Opposition, which makes sense; you want to promote your leader, obviously, Mr. Speaker. But what was front and centre in those ads were things where he was talking about . . . Mr. Speaker, I hope he asks another question because I'd like to finish.

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

[Interjections]

Land Sales at Global Transportation Hub

Ms. Sproule: — Wow. Mr. Speaker, the tumbleweeds are still rolling around at the unsold land at the GTH [Global Transportation Hub]. And it isn't just the unsold land, Mr. Speaker. There are many empty lots that are sold to Morguard, CACN. There's lease land for a commercial service centre, along with 145 acres that Bill Boyd made SaskPower purchase in 2013 — all empty, not being developed, growing weeds instead of wheat.

More than five years after Bill Boyd, the GTH minister, convinced Bill Boyd, the SaskPower minister, to purchase \$25 million of land at the GTH, there's still no plan to go forward. To the minister: what's the plan for SaskPower's GTH land?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, with a sales force like the members opposite, we won't be selling land very readily this month. Mr. Speaker, the good thing is the session's over fairly soon, and we hope that the people that are working at the GTH will be able . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Will the members from Rosemont and Cumberland please come to order. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the goal is of course to sell land. The market economy has slowed down. They're working aggressively at trying to market. They're trying to bring some private forces in to try and do some marketing. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite aren't helping market this land, and I understand. That's their role in the opposition.

But, Mr. Speaker, what they could do is at least recognize something for the people that go to work there every day: the nearly 1,000 people that work in the Loblaw facility, the nearly 5,000 trucks a week that go in and out of that facility. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are not being helpful to those individuals, those corporations that come here, those corporations that pay taxes. And those corporations are the ones that are building Saskatchewan, not trying to damage Saskatchewan like the members over there.

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

Support for Survivors of Domestic Violence

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, here's something that cannot be said enough in this room: Saskatchewan has the highest rates of domestic violence in the country. Our Bill 614 would provide five paid days' leave to survivors of domestic violence who could use that right this . . . today, someone like the woman whose story was shared to me by a shelter worker.

This mother came to their shelter with her two children. She was afraid her partner would call or show up at her workplace while she was in the shelter. She told the worker she couldn't take the unpaid work days available in legislation because she couldn't afford to lose the income. This woman ended up returning back to her abuser with the hope of trying to save up enough money so she could leave him for good. The worker asked this woman if paid leave would have made her choice easier, and she said, "Absolutely."

The time to consult is over. This ask is over two years old. Will the minister finally do the right thing, commit to passing Bill 614 today, and provide Saskatchewan survivors the supports that already exist in other provinces?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. The issue she raised is one that all members in this Assembly take seriously. I heard her on the media reporting the situation, and I think it's a tragedy when somebody's work interferes with their ability to deal with an intense personal crisis. If the individual wants to come forward, we'll see if we can't do something to make sure that we arrange for some kind of help or look at the situation specifically, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I understand from talking to many of the employers in the province that they are providing the leave voluntarily. We're going through some additional consultation, Mr. Speaker, and we're looking what the other provinces are doing. The point the members are making is one that bears periodic review. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members opposite this is something that needs to be looked at and will in fact be looked at, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER**Withdrawal of Statement and Apology**

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, in an exchange across the floor I used language referring to the Minister of Social Services' statements that was unparliamentary. I referred to his remarks as being bullshit, Mr. Speaker. That was clearly unparliamentary and for that I apologize and withdraw the remark.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the committees may carry on their good work today, I move this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — It has been moved that this Assembly do now

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 14:27.]

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