



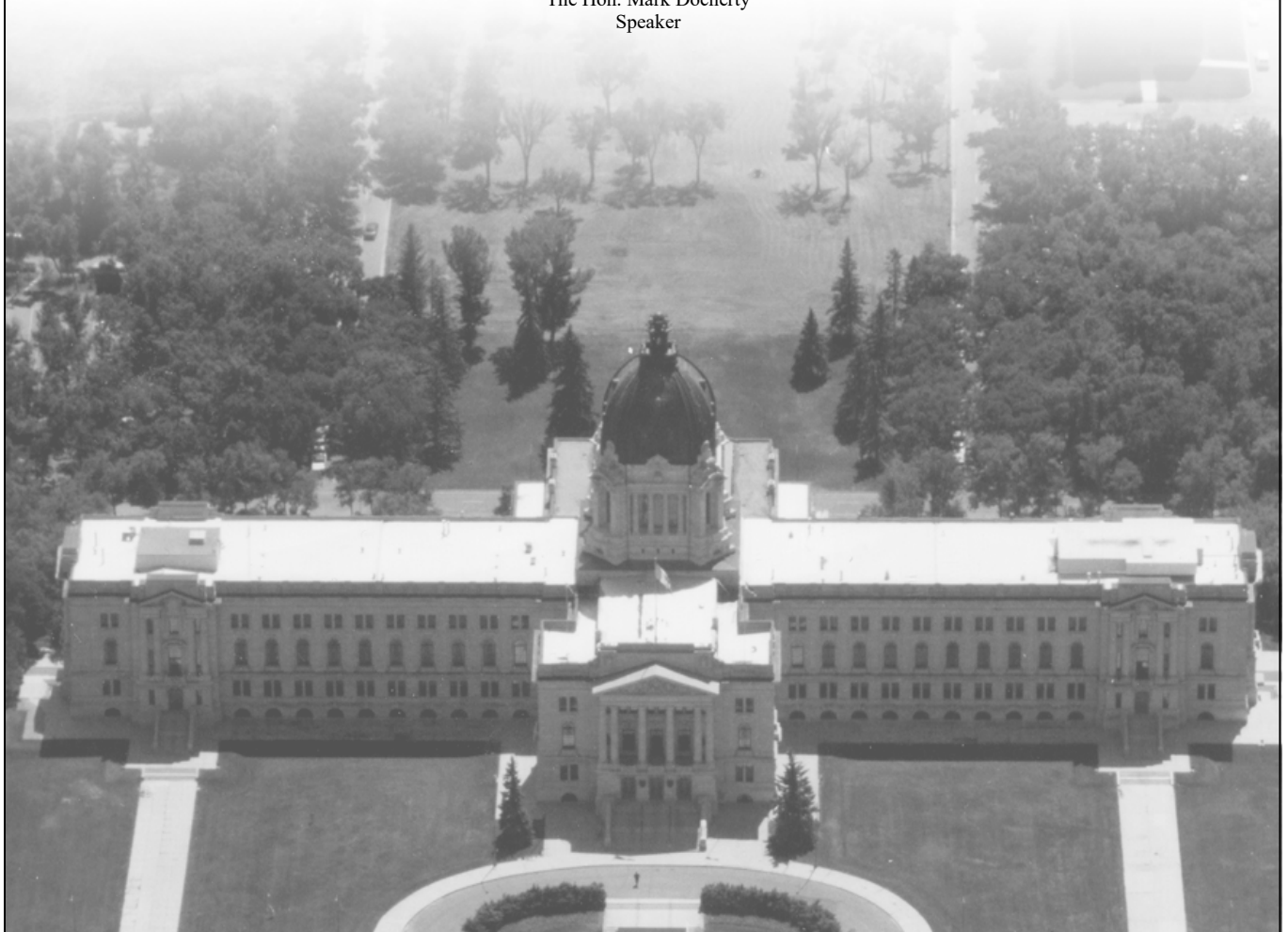
THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

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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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: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we're joined by members of the Sixties Scoop Indigenous . . . Oh, pardon me. I ask leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — The Leader of the Opposition has asked for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the leader.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we're joined by members of the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Saskatchewan. In your gallery we have Vince Vandale, Shelby LaRose, Anna McArthur, Melissa Parkyn, and well known to all members in the Assembly, Mr. Robert Doucette. These folks are part of a group that over the last number of years has been advocating for greater awareness and knowledge of the events of the Sixties Scoop, advocated for an apology and continues to advocate for action in response to past actions of Saskatchewan governments for restitution and improvement of the circumstance of those affected by the Sixties Scoop.

And I want to take the opportunity of their presence today to join with the Premier in offering my words, our words, of apology for those of us on the opposition side to those present and to all whose lives were impacted by the Sixties Scoop. That policy, which took its most severe form here in Saskatchewan through the adopt Indian and Métis program, or AIM, was a race-based policy that separated untold number of children from their parents and adopted them out — out of their families, out of their homes, out of their culture, out of their communities, even out of the province. And in the process, these children had their cultures stolen from them, their identity stolen from them. They lost their connection to home reserves and home communities. It's been rightfully described as an act of cultural genocide.

Mr. Speaker, this was a policy of successive governments, of successive governments including, I'm ashamed to say, of New Democratic governments. Here in the people's House, on behalf of the official opposition, on behalf of the New Democratic Party and of all of Saskatchewan, I wish to add our voice to the government's apologies. We are truly sorry. And we ask of those who have suffered and of the Creator who made us all, we ask for forgiveness. We ask for healing. And we ask for change.

Forgiveness for harm done to children, for the pain caused to their parents, and for the damage to communities. Families were not respected. The strength of aunts and uncles, of mosôms and kohkoms, was overlooked, and tremendous trauma was inflicted. And some of these wounds, the wounds of children who died, of children who are lost to their families, who experienced abuse or

simply cannot replace the lost years, some of these wounds will never heal.

And yet we ask for healing, that wherever possible people can reconnect with their families, their culture, their home communities, with the parts of themselves that have been lost, and that these apologies and commitments to change can assist in that healing.

And lastly we ask for change. Still today there are far too many broken families, families struggling with addictions and poverty. Still today there are far too many children who suffer abuse. Still today there are far too many children separated from their families.

Our commitment must be to them, to work toward changes in child welfare, yes, but not only in child welfare, in every aspect of our province's life to ensure that families receive the support they need so that every child has a chance to live their best life. So I ask all members to join me in these words of apology and join me in welcoming these brave leaders to their legislature, and offering our commitment to do better for them and for generations to come.

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming Anna Marie McArthur, Melissa Parkyn, Shelby LaRose, Vince Vandale, and Robert Doucette, who is very familiar to this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the Sixties Scoop apology happened early this year. It was heartfelt from the government. Mr. Speaker, the journey that these survivors and other survivors that I was able to hear while we had the talking circles around the province, Mr. Speaker, was heartfelt. It was honest and it was awakening to myself, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that the Sixties group survivors allowed me to participate in the last steps of their journey towards an apology. Mr. Speaker, I consider them very close friends. We've been through a lot, shed some tears together.

But, Mr. Speaker, what they have endured, Mr. Speaker, the Premier captured very well in the apology that was very heartfelt earlier this year. Mr. Speaker, like I said, I was able to join them on a very small part of their journey coming up to the apology which we held in the rotunda. And we finished it off where I travelled up and we had a sweat, which was emotional, Mr. Speaker, to be able to sit down with some of the survivors and have a sweat. The sweat itself was very challenging, but the emotional side of it was very challenging as well, Mr. Speaker. So on behalf of the Premier and on behalf of this side of the government, I want to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Mr. Speaker, I'd 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. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great honour today that I introduce to members of the Legislative Assembly, Shelley Duke. Shelley, give us a wave up there. And Shelley is joined here today with her daughters, Wendy and Heather.

Mr. Speaker, Shelley is the senior administrative assistant in my office. She joined our office in March of 2018, so you could say she saved the very best for last. Or I guess you could say I drove her to retirement — probably more appropriate, the second one.

Shelley began her 31-year career with government in December of 1985 in the Ministry of Tourism and Renewable Resources. She's also worked for the ministries of Economic Development, Sask Opportunities Corp, and Economy. She came to this building in January of 2008 and served under the ministers of Enterprise and Innovation, Public Service Commission, ITO [information technology office], Social Services, and Agriculture.

As mentioned, Shelley came to work in my office in March of '18, and I feel so very privileged to have worked with such a wonderful person. She gets me where I need to be, which I know is a little bit hard at times and hard to believe, but she does. And she gets me there on time, which again is a very big job, all with a smile on her face and such an honest, honest laugh.

While all of us here, we know how important our staff is when it comes to keeping everything running smooth, and I have just felt truly honoured to have her in our office, and more importantly, I feel honoured that she and I are friends.

Shelley is retiring tomorrow and I'm hoping that it's not due to the handful that I've been for her even though we do get along so well. But I have a feeling even though she's officially retired, that she'll be still tuning in to question period next week, hopefully watching from the comfort of her deck amongst her flowers that she loves so much. I was told that even though she has worked in government for 31 years, that she's never attended question period. So I am glad she and her daughters are able to join us today and I hope that they might watch it again, but maybe not after the day's events.

A little birdie also told me that Shelley's celebrating a very special birthday on Saturday — 29 and holding, of course. I'm not sure how she gets to retire when she's only 29 years old, but have a wonderful birthday, Shelley.

So Shelley, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan and myself and the staff in our office, I want to thank you for your 31 years of service to the people of this province. I ask all members to join me in welcoming Shelley to her legislative chambers and wish her all the best in her very well-deserved retirement. Thank you.

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation in recognizing

Shelley Duke's service to the Government of Saskatchewan over 31 years and particularly the help that she was to me. I remember in 2007, I was a brand new green minister moving into the Economy portfolio — it had a different name then — and with a brand new green staff that none of us really knew what we were doing. And Shelley was sent over from the ministry to help out for a few days, and immediately I recognized that I wanted Shelley to stay and so I asked for that to happen. And so she stayed with me during the time that I was a minister over there. And then I requested that she move with me when I became the Minister of Agriculture, and she kept me organized and always had my back. And I thank you, Shelley, for that and our friendship.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Makowsky: — Mr. Speaker, just briefly I'd like to join in the previous two members in saying congratulations to Shelley Duke on her long service to the people of the province of Saskatchewan. I am very lucky to represent her here in Regina and, because of that, her skills and expertise have really helped out on our constituency association.

In our conversations, frequently comes up is her grandkids. And I imagine she's going to spend a lot more time following them around, and we'll hear more stories about that. But also in the conversation was the countdown of how much longer until today happened. So it's good that it's finally here and we're sorry to lose you, but best wishes and we'll still be very much dealing with Shelley on the other end of it. So I'd ask all members to congratulate Shelley.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery, I would like to introduce Don Funk who is here today with his wife, Eleanor. Mr. Funk is a business owner from Saskatoon, and his wife and he are constituents of mine.

Don is accompanied today by Mr. Liu and Mr. Sun. Mr. Liu is a recent resident of Saskatchewan. Mr. Sun is also new to the province and is in the process of becoming a resident. And we are always happy certainly to see established members of our business community working with new and aspiring residents to the province. So please join me, Mr. Speaker, in welcoming them today to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you to the rest of the Assembly, I want to introduce 23 grade 12 students seated in the west gallery as well as on the floor, Mr. Speaker, from Greenall High School in Balgonie.

They're here to watch the proceedings. Then we'll get a picture, and maybe I'll try and answer some of their questions after they witness question period, Mr. Speaker. Accompanying them are their teachers, Samantha Kelly and Carmen Olah-Palfy. Mr. Speaker, as I said, I'd like all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of residents of northern Saskatchewan. There is a definite need of a long-term care facility in La Ronge area, and according to the Croft report of 2009 shows that the area is in a code red.

There was 500,000 allocated for planning. That was spent, and the plan has been ready for years. Seniors are waiting 165 days on average for a bed and are being shipped hours away from loved ones.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Sask Party government treat northern Saskatchewan's senior citizens with respect and dignity and immediately invest in a new long-term care facility in La Ronge.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by many good people of northern Saskatchewan. I so present.

[10:15]

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

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

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 province.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good citizens of Battleford, Glaslyn, and North Battleford. I do so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to present a petition on the Regina bypass project. The people who have signed this petition would like to bring to our attention the following: very few details about the Regina bypass project are publicly available, despite it being the costliest infrastructure project funded by taxpayers in the province's history.

Ministry officials identified and documented major deficiencies in the project that were in an email that has yet to be released in full for public review. In the Assembly, the previous minister of Highways referenced the breach of an aquifer in Wascana Creek as an example of one of these major deficiencies. However, our current Minister of Highways has repeatedly stated on the record that "There are no major deficiencies on this bypass."

Saskatchewan people will be paying for this piece of infrastructure for the next 30 years, Mr. Speaker, and in the interest of government transparency, these contradictory statements require clarification.

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 immediately release a full, unredacted copy of records detailing all minor and major deficiencies identified in the Regina Bypass Project to date.

Mr. Speaker, these citizens who have presented this petition today are from the city of Regina and the community of Zehner. I so submit.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to get big money out of Saskatchewan politics. And 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, even those living outside of Saskatchewan, to make unlimited donations to our province's political parties.

But, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan deserve to live in a fair province where all voices are equal and money can't influence politics. But we know, Mr. Speaker, that over the past 10 years the Sask 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, 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 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.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition today come from the communities of Lafleche and Moose Jaw. 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 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 rates of domestic violence amongst all of the

provinces in Canada, and employers should be obligated to reasonably accommodate survivors of domestic violence in the workplace; employees who are survivors of domestic violence should be able to take a leave of absence, both paid and unpaid, from their employment without penalty; and that Saskatchewan must do much more to protect survivors of domestic violence.

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 Legislative Assembly to pass legislation providing critical support for survivors of domestic violence.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing this petition today come from Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling on the government for real action on climate change. Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition were young students who gathered here on the steps of our legislature demanding action on climate change. Mr. Speaker, they want to bring to our attention that Saskatchewan produces the highest greenhouse gas emissions per capita in all of Canada, and that under the Saskatchewan Party government our emissions in this province have grown.

Mr. Speaker, this government could have used its power to help convince people across the province that they could do more to fight climate change. And instead, Mr. Speaker, to the scorn, this government has used its power to convince people that they ought to do nothing or to do less than they are doing. And, Mr. Speaker, that's a real problem. That has set our province on a backwards course. Mr. Speaker, under this government payments under the provincial disaster assistance program have grown hundredfold in some cases.

The petitioners in this petition, Mr. Speaker:

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

The people signing this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Saskatoon and Regina. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Lloydminster.

Newspaper Staff Are Award Winners

Ms. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to congratulate two writers from the *Meridian Source* local newspaper in my constituency on being recognized at the Saskatchewan Weekly Newspaper Association Awards.

Deanna Wandler, their sales manager, was awarded the Julie Schau Memorial Award. This award highlights those who work every day to help keep the industry strong and thriving. For Deanna, this industry means everything to her. She has been in the newspaper industry now for 25 years and feels very fortunate to be part of its community.

Reporter Geoff Lee also took home an award and was recognized for the Best Educational Coverage Post Secondary Education throughout all of Saskatchewan. With good humour, Geoff immediately asked for a raise from the *Meridian Source*, threatening to leave to *The Washington Post*. I always enjoy visiting with and talking to Geoff, as he always has interesting stories to tell and is full of questions. However, Mr. Speaker, we know how important his work is here in Saskatchewan, so I hope the *Meridian Source* keeps him.

Mr. Speaker, the awards were held in conjunction with the AGM [annual general meeting] for the Saskatchewan Weekly Newspaper Association, where members were able to come together, celebrate success, and focus on their vision for the future of Saskatchewan newspapers.

I now ask all members to please join me in congratulating Deanna Wandler and Geoff Lee for being recognized at the Saskatchewan Weekly Newspaper Association Awards. Thank you.

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

Regina Students to Receive Award for *What's Your Frequency?* Project

Mr. Pedersen: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate grade 7 and 8 students at St. Gregory School and their teacher Brett Matlock for their project, *What's Your Frequency?*. Last night the member from Regina Douglas Park and I attended the UnderstandUs gala where the video *What's Your Frequency?* campaign was launched.

The project's aim was to encourage students to inquire beyond the outside, visible shell of a person, the cover of their book, to see what's inside. Each of them shared their insecurities and vulnerabilities with another student at another school, a stranger, so that they got to know that person from the inside out. Their project highlights the importance of empathy and understanding each other, so even though we may be on different frequencies we're not alone. This campaign is part of the important work being done by UnderstandUs and Jim Demeray to build better mental health here in our province, especially with our youth.

These youth were talented, engaged, and passionate. I was inspired and moved last night, and I encourage all members to view and share their video. For this excellent work, the students will be awarded the Prairieaction Foundation Youth Leadership Award that recognizes youth groups who are making their schools and communities safer by raising awareness about abuse and violence, and developing innovative approaches to violence prevention. This is the second year in a row that St. Gregory students have received this award. We have much to learn from these students and I hope they continue to teach us well into the future.

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

Crime Stoppers Initiative Aims to Help Find Missing Persons

Mr. Nerlien: — Mr. Speaker, today is a special day for families who have suffered months and often years of anguish and despair as their loved ones have gone missing. Today, Mr. Speaker, a new initiative is introduced in Saskatchewan by Crime Stoppers. Constable Ryan Ehalt has been working for three years in developing the concept specific to finding information that will lead to next steps in investigations of some of the 131 historical missing persons files in Saskatchewan.

There are many different reasons why people go missing. The goal of this project is to find missing persons who have gone missing because they have been taken. Mr. Speaker, Constable Ehalt uses terms like “whispers in the wind” to ask anyone with even the smallest bit of information, perhaps from a broken relationship, perhaps a rumour from the past, perhaps a sense of guilt — anything that might bring forward a clue as to the whereabouts of any of these persons taken from their world. In these cases it is often people closest that can be of most assistance.

Crime Stoppers callers remain completely anonymous and never have to reveal their name and never have to go to court. They simply give information that might help in these most troubling cases. Mr. Speaker, we all know that Crime Stoppers is an extremely effective program in helping solve crimes. Let’s all encourage them as they reach out to heal families through this initiative. Thank you.

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

National Nursing Week and International Nurses Day

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize National Nursing Week and International Nurses Day, which falls on May 12th this year. Today and throughout the week we’ve had the opportunity to reflect on the difference nurses make in our health care system.

Here in the province much leadership has been provided by the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, which has been fighting for safe, quality health care since 1974. It is important to also recognize the work of licensed practical nurses in the province as a key member of the health care team.

Nursing is often identified as one of the most trusted professions in Canada. Many of us know a nurse who demonstrates the courage, knowledge, and support that makes their role in health care so important. Mr. Speaker, supporting our talented and motivated health workers is essential for the health of Saskatchewan people. Quality health service cannot be achieved without an adequate number of appropriately prepared nurses, and we support these organizations and their calls for better health care in the province. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking nurses for the valuable work they do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

North Regina Little League Opening Day

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on May 5th, I attended the North Regina Little League baseball’s opening day ceremony in celebration of their 30th anniversary, along with the players, families, alumni, and community members.

The NRLL [North Regina Little League] is a youth baseball league that consists of over 650 players between the ages of 4 and 16. The league works to engage players in a healthy athletic competition, improvement of self-discipline, self-esteem, teamwork, and development of life skills and character.

Mr. Speaker, the opening day began with a team parade, speeches, an Indigenous drum group, and the 620 CKRM Saskatchewan Roughrider Pep Band. I was also honoured to throw out the first pitch of the day alongside of city councillor Jerry Flegel. The afternoon was filled with fun activities, including a dunk tank, ring toss, and face painting, as well as delicious anniversary cupcakes.

Mr. Speaker, on Saturday it was also announced that in 2022, the NRLL will host the Little League Canadian Championships, and the winner will go on to represent Canada at the well-known Little League World Series.

Mr. Speaker, I’d like to thank the coaches, directors, executive members, groundskeepers, managers, and other volunteers that donate their time and enable this league to continue and prosper. I now ask all members to join me in celebrating the North Regina Little League baseball family on their 30th anniversary and successful opening day ceremony and wish all the teams good luck in the upcoming season. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Tisdale Trojans Win Bronze Medal at Telus Cup

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Good Friday the Tisdale Trojans Hockey Club headed to Thunder Bay to participate in the 2019 Telus Cup. They had a large send-off of close to 100 fans waiting at the Tisdale RECplex to wish them luck. Mr. Speaker, the Trojans qualified for the Telus Cup by besting the Thunder Bay Kings at the western regionals a couple of weeks prior.

The Telus Cup is a national midget hockey championship tournament that began in 1984 with a six-team format. Saskatchewan has won the most medals of any province at that tournament, and this is the province’s 22nd medal at the tournament since it began. Throughout the tournament, the Trojans faced off against stiff competition, but they fought hard and secured themselves a playoff spot.

Mr. Speaker, on Easter Sunday the Trojans played against the Calgary Buffaloes in the bronze medal final. It was a hard-fought 60 minutes of hockey that saw the Trojans beat the Buffaloes to bring home the bronze medal. Jayden Wiens and Davis Chorney each netted a goal for the first period, and during the second

period Jayden scored his second of the night, securing a 3-2 victory. Goaltender Tanner Martin had a spectacular game with 34 saves.

[10:30]

I ask all members to congratulate the Tisdale Trojans on their incredible performance at the 2019 Telus Cup. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Gull Lake Hosts Hockey Day in Saskatchewan

Mr. Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Gull Lake had a big reason to celebrate this past winter when they raised 128,000 from hosting Hockey Day in Saskatchewan. The funds raised from the event will go towards the rink and its much-needed renovations.

Mr. Speaker, this seven-day event took a lot of effort from the great organizing staff, and once the grand total was announced, an overwhelming feeling of pride and gratitude was felt towards the volunteers and the committee members. Each day the crowds grew in numbers, excited to take in action in exciting hockey, but also participate in the events like cribbage, sleigh rides, community skating, trade show, minigolf, scavenger hunt, and even fireworks. To top off the great week, players, coaches, volunteers, sponsors came together for a great banquet which featured keynote speaker Dennis Hull. Because of this year's success, Mr. Speaker, their organizing committee is already looking to another event they can do next year to pull the community back together and celebrate what we all love the most — hockey.

I now ask the members to join me in congratulating the Gull Lake Hockey Day in Saskatchewan organization committee, players, staff, and volunteers on a successful event. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Measurement of Class Sizes and Support for Education

Ms. Beck: — Yesterday the minister claimed, in response to questions about class sizes, "I've been in classrooms. I've had conversations with teachers and school divisions, Mr. Speaker, and I understand some of the issues that classrooms are facing."

Now if the minister really understood, he'd know that the number of 19 bears no resemblance to what is actually going on in our classrooms. STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] president Patrick Maze put a call out to his members asking how many students they're seeing in their classrooms. Mr. Speaker, many responses were in the 30's and even 40's. When will the minister stop the lines and actually address the growing class sizes that are holding our students back and making it so hard for teachers to do their job?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to reiterate the answer that I gave yesterday in question

period. The average class size in this province is 19, Mr. Speaker. In rural Saskatchewan the average is 18 and in urban Saskatchewan the number is 21, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that average class size — and I know that there's been some comments from the other side of the House — but that average class size focused on educator resources specifically supporting student learning in the classroom on a day-to-day basis, Mr. Speaker. And that's the average in this province. If you want to talk about overall educator ratio, Mr. Speaker, the number's 14.5. But in terms of people in the classroom supporting children in our classroom, the number's 19.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad she realizes and recognizes the fact that I have been in classrooms. I'm going to be in a number of classrooms this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. And we have these conversations with teachers. We understand what some of the challenges are, Mr. Speaker. Over the last two years, significant investments in public education so that this year, Mr. Speaker, the largest, the largest education operating budget in the history of the province, Mr. Speaker.

Is there more work to do? You bet there is, Mr. Speaker. And that's exactly why we're moving forward to consider how we can innovate delivery in the classroom, how we can innovate funding models, Mr. Speaker. These are all conversations that we need to have to make sure that we can provide the best possible support for children in our classrooms.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I hope that the minister follows the STF on Twitter. He can follow that thread himself. I know these teachers know how to count and they know how many kids are in their classrooms.

Mr. Speaker, I guess one strategy if you don't like the answer is just to simply stop asking the question. This government used to track class sizes but they don't anymore. How can the minister expect to address the problem of crowded classrooms, let alone the growing complexity in those classrooms, if they're not even tracking the number of kids in classes?

My question is simple: when will the Sask Party government start tracking class sizes again and make our children's education the priority that it deserves?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the ministry tracks average class sizes in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. The method for tracking class sizes has been consistent over the last 20 years, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — You stopped tracking in 2013.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, there was a change in 2013 — and I'm glad the member pointed that out — in terms of how that information was reported, Mr. Speaker, but certainly not in the way it was calculated. It's no longer rolled up in overall projections, indicator reports and published, Mr. Speaker, but it's certainly available to the media and the public and the sector

should they request that information, Mr. Speaker. It's reported locally, Mr. Speaker, through annual reports of school divisions. And, Mr. Speaker, that information is hidden right on the internet.

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

Process Surrounding Apology for Sixties Scoop

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are joined today by members of the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Saskatchewan, a number of whom were here for the apology back in January. We're joined by these survivors, these advocates, advocates whose work led to a report that led up to that apology, a report that the government requested but didn't make public. We were able to obtain this through an FOI [freedom of information] request, Mr. Speaker, and we discovered that in that report there were a number of recommendations, eight categories of strong recommendations on how to support survivors, how to create more awareness, and how to make sure that situations like this don't happen again.

Unfortunately that report was shelved. No actions have been taken. None of those recommendations have been followed. So my question for the Deputy Premier is, why ask for a report like that if there was never any intention to take any action on the recommendations?

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And again, as I stated in my welcome remarks, I was honoured to participate in the Sixties Scoop group. Mr. Speaker, this started . . . My journey started about two years ago with them in meeting in boardrooms and transcended into talking circles all across the province. We had MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] at every one of these events, Mr. Speaker, and we also had our cabinet ministers there because what we were asked to do by the Sixties group survivors was to be able to sit and listen. And that's exactly what we did, Mr. Speaker.

We appreciate all the work that they've done, Mr. Speaker, across the province and what they've done to elevate this issue to the government's level. And I'm very proud that the Premier was able to deliver that apology, not just on behalf of this government, but on behalf of all governments in Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In his introduction this morning, the minister referred to the apology as the last step in a process. It should have been the first step. Why did this government ask for recommendations, ask for direction from the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Saskatchewan and yet ignore those recommendations?

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think in the apology — I was sitting right there — the Premier acknowledged that this was a wrong, Mr. Speaker, again on behalf of all governments. And as far as what we're doing, Mr. Speaker, I'm

very proud to say what we have talked about in this Assembly many times, and outside this Assembly, is our new agreement with the Saskatoon Tribal Council. This is exactly what we're doing right now to make sure that this doesn't come and happen again, Mr. Speaker.

I've got a couple of quotes here that I'd like to be able to read in the record from Tribal Chief Mark Arcand on what we're doing on a go-forward basis, Mr. Speaker:

I am going to sit here and brag about our relationship with the province because it's important. People need to understand what we are working on together and what's best for the children. The second piece is when we look at this whole process, I really have to give credit to Premier Scott Moe and to Minister Paul Merriman and the cabinet of Saskatchewan for taking a chance with the Saskatoon Tribal Council and building a relationship that partners with us.

Mr. Speaker, this is exactly what our government is doing. We're working with our Indigenous partners. We now have 18 agreements, Mr. Speaker, to be able to deliver the service on behalf of Social Services. We value these partnerships, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to grow them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — We discussed this a few days ago here in this House, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Government Relations, on April 18th, said that "Our Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Saskatchewan supplied the minister with a report that was designed to help form the apology." That apology was delivered this January.

That lines up with what we heard from the minister this morning, the idea that that was a last step, not a first step. And it's a very strange response to these questions. It dismisses the hard work of this report that has been shelved, the hard work of the advocates. It dismisses those recommendations. We heard zero attention to those recommendations.

So my question for the minister is this. Actually, let's ask this one to the Deputy Premier; that's where it belongs. How serious is an apology from this government if it ignores the recommendations that accompanied that apology?

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, we took all of the stories that we heard from the talking circles as well as from the board very seriously, Mr. Speaker. There was a lot of emotion going on during the talking circles, Mr. Speaker. It was a very eye-opening experience, certainly as a resident of Saskatchewan but also as the Minister of Social Services, Mr. Speaker. It refocused me on how I can in my current role make sure that this doesn't come to fruition again.

That's why we've made sure that we're keeping any children that temporarily have to come into the custody of Social Services, we're keeping them connected with persons of sufficient interest, Mr. Speaker, to be able to make sure that they have a connection to their family, to their community, and to their culture, Mr.

Speaker. That's what we heard from the survivors, Mr. Speaker, and we're glad to keep continuing working on that with our current 18 agreements that we have with our Indigenous partners that deliver those services on behalf of the First Nations, our partnership agreements, and our First Contact Panel, Mr. Speaker. These are important steps forward to make sure that we're respectful of the Indigenous community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — The number one recommendation and the most pressing recommendation from the SSISS [Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Saskatchewan] group was to establish a task force.

On August 31st of this year, if survivors don't have their information, if they don't have their details on their history, they won't be eligible for the federal compensation that they deserve. They asked for a task force. They asked for help. What are they getting instead? They're getting letters from the ministry saying, sorry, we don't have your records. That's it. No sorry, we don't have your records and we'll help you find them through these other agencies; sorry, we don't have your records and we're working on finding them through another source and we're working to find the records of those who aren't even identified yet as survivors. Are they doing that work? No. They're not doing that work at all despite that being the number one recommendation.

If this apology was sincere, if the concern was sincere, if the emotion that the minister felt during those circles was sincere, why is there no action on this task force, the number one recommendation?

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, what can I say other than the Leader of the Opposition thinks my emotion is not appropriate. I think that's extremely disrespectful, Mr. Speaker. I was there at all of those. I listened; I talked to the people, Mr. Speaker. I met with them.

The reason that, Mr. Speaker, we were invited to those talking circles is because the Sixties Scoop survivors didn't want to make this a political issue. That's what they told me at the time, Mr. Speaker. Again if there's . . . The major recommendation that did come out was on record retention, Mr. Speaker. We are able to retain, and 85 per cent of the requests that have come in, Mr. Speaker, on any information to deal with this, Mr. Speaker, we've been able to get those records back to the individuals.

Also, Mr. Speaker, if there is people that are applying for the federal class action lawsuit, Mr. Speaker, I encourage them. I've said it in this Assembly before; this Leader of the Opposition has asked this question. The process can start without those records, Mr. Speaker. I'd encourage them to apply to the federal class action lawsuit, Mr. Speaker, and we will work with them to obtain their records to make sure that their file is complete when that process happens. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — The evidence of sincerity would be action, Mr. Speaker, and we have clear recommendations from the survivors group. Clear recommendations. Clear recommendations for a task force. That's what they asked for. They asked for a task force, and instead they're getting letters that essentially dismiss their concerns, that the reports aren't there and that no further efforts will be taken to find those reports.

We've sat with these survivors as well, Mr. Speaker. We've heard exactly what their experience has been in terms of support from the ministry. It is inadequate, and they want action. When will that sincerity be demonstrated through the establishment and development of the task force as requested?

[10:45]

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, my sincerity is genuine and so was that of the Premier when he apologized, Mr. Speaker. We were the first government to take action on this. We allocated money for the group to be able to go and work around the province to help retain and collect any information and notify anybody that was involved with the Sixties Scoop or had family that was involved in the Sixties Scoop, to be able to bring them to a talking circle. That's why the talking circles were held in Meadow Lake, Prince Albert, Regina, Saskatoon, and Fort Qu'Appelle. These places were not chosen by the Government of Saskatchewan. It was chosen by the board, Mr. Speaker, because that's where they felt that was going to be most impact and the easiest for everybody to get to.

We had a celebration out in the rotunda, Mr. Speaker. There was many great people that came and were to able to talk about their stories and felt relieved when the Premier said I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. There were stories about . . . There was something in their heart that was able to feel that this Premier was genuine in his comments, Mr. Speaker.

I find it very disappointing that the Leader of the Opposition is trying to make some political points on this. This is a very serious issue and we took this very seriously when we were out working with the organizations. That's why we had people from our caucus and from our cabinet at every one of the talking circles. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have yet to hear the minister acknowledge the recommendations or the failure to act on those recommendations. I'll refer to a couple more of those recommendations, recommendations 2 and 3.

The second one was for a public awareness campaign to make the public more aware, make sure that people actually understand what happened in Saskatchewan. The Sixties Scoop has often been a forgotten part of our history. It should not. It should be incorporated into curriculum. When residential school history is taught, Sixties Scoop history should be taught alongside. There should be public events.

The other thing that is clearly recommended, recommendation no. 3 . . . The minister talks about the sharing circles that took

place. The clear recommendation was that not be the end, that this is not the last step, that the apology not be the last step, but that it is a beginning of continuing those sharing circles.

Those are the second and third recommendations on a report that we have yet to see this ministry make public on purpose, or take any action to follow up on. On what grounds should we take seriously any apology that doesn't follow through with the actions of the group to whom this government chose to apologize?

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, I don't think we've ever stepped away as a government in talking about this, Mr. Speaker. We've been talking about this, from my perspective, for over two years. And when I said that this was the end of the journey, Mr. Speaker, what I was implying was that that was the end of the journey for the apology, which Mr. Doucette certainly, up in there, had said he had waited his whole life to hear that. So that was the end of the journey of the apology, Mr. Speaker.

As I've been told by Mr. Doucette, there is talking circles that go on around the province. I believe he has one in the Indian Métis Friendship Centre in Saskatoon on an ongoing basis. If there's any concerns about our sincerity on this, Mr. Speaker, I just can't understand why the Leader of the Opposition is trying to again make some political points where we were genuine with our apology back in January.

It was done, I think, in the best way possible. We got some advice from the Alberta Sixties group survivors. They were in consultation on what we should do, Mr. Speaker. And the apology was the last step for just the apology. The journey continues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — So if the journey continues, will the minister acknowledge the recommendations? And what actions will he be taking — and when — to complete those recommendations?

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Again, as I've stated before, some of the recommendations are already happening, Mr. Speaker. One of the recommendations was to be able to get the record retention. And as I've said, Mr. Speaker, if anybody contacts Social Services, we will do our due diligence to be able to find those records. Also, Mr. Speaker, some of the records are non-existent anymore because they were from other provinces, Mr. Speaker, or just due to them deteriorating over time. This did happen over 60 years ago, Mr. Speaker.

An 85 per cent retention rate on our records is something that I'm very proud of, Mr. Speaker, because we've done our due diligence on this, to be able to make sure that there is information back to the survivors so they can have some closure on this, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The recommendation

was clearly not simply that the ministry would respond and say, sorry, we don't have these reports, but that work would be done, that a task force would be put into place so that every possible avenue would be pursued to make sure that anyone who had an experience through Sixties Scoop would be able to be eligible for that compensation. That work is not done. That task force is not in place, Mr. Speaker. That is very clear.

Another one of the recommendations was for the ministry to stop redacting information about the foster families with which Sixties Scoop survivors were housed, whether that is in order to be able to reconnect with a positive family experience or to identify people who perpetrated abuse against these survivors and be able to pursue any action through courts. This information should be the property of the survivors. They should be able to know in what homes they grew up. What steps are being taken to proceed with that recommendation?

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Again, directly to the question, Mr. Speaker, there are privacy issues that are involved with this, Mr. Speaker. Some information has to be redacted, and the Leader of the Opposition should be very well aware of that.

Mr. Speaker, again, we're very proud of this process. We didn't drive the process, Mr. Speaker. It was done by the board. They picked the locations. They picked the . . . As far as public awareness, they sent out all of the information to be able to make sure that anybody that wanted to be able to participate in these talking circles or just needed to be able to come and just listen . . . Not everybody participated in talking. Some people just needed to listen, Mr. Speaker.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm very disappointed that the NDP [New Democratic Party] across the way is starting to make political points on this, Mr. Speaker. Again, and I've mentioned this before and I know they got upset but, Mr. Speaker, we on our side of the government and this side of the House was able to participate in that and, Mr. Speaker, I didn't see anybody from the opposition in the talking circles, listening to what the survivors had to say. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, as we've discussed in this House, we would have been very happy to participate in sharing circles, had we been invited. But in fact when we were told about them, we were actively uninvited. And this minister actually criticized members of the society for having done so.

And when we talk about making this political, it's very clear that when all you have is a show in the rotunda, when all you have is a show in the rotunda and no sincerity to follow up on the recommendations and take any action on behalf of the survivors, that's when you're playing political games, Mr. Speaker.

Now back to the question: does the Deputy Premier, does the Deputy Premier who understands the law, does he truly believe that people who grew up in foster care, who want to . . .

[Interjections]

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

Mr. Meili: — Does he truly believe that children growing up in a home, who are now adults, don't have a right to know in what home they were raised? Do they not have the right to know who their foster parents were?

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, I don't even know what to say. We had a ceremony out there, Mr. Speaker. There was people that were shedding tears. I have a quote here from Mr. Doucette that said:

I waited 56 years for this apology. I heard the Premier say he was sorry, and there was acknowledgement of the harms that . . . perpetrated on First Nations and Métis children and I appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, there were tears shed. This is not a show, Mr. Speaker. That is completely disrespectful to the months and the work that this organization was able to put forward, Mr. Speaker, to be able to deliver an apology. This apology was also . . . And I want to talk about the Premier's personal involvement in this. He was able to meet with the Co-Chairs prior to this and go through his speech with them, which is very unprecedented, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that it hit exactly the tone that they were looking for.

This is the respect that our side of the House had for this apology, Mr. Speaker. This was no show. And for the Leader of the Opposition to say that, that's just shameful.

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

Suicide Prevention Strategy

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For a government to stand up, make an apology, but then be unwilling to follow through with any of the actions, any of the recommendations, that is just putting on a show, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what that is, and it's a huge disappointment. It's a huge disappointment for this government to use nice words but not be willing to follow up with actions. But we've heard that before. We hear that from this government all the time. Lip service, but not willing to commit.

And so today we'll get a test of whether or not there is any willingness to take any action on the behalf of the most vulnerable in this province. Today the member for Cumberland will be standing up and presenting his motion to have a suicide strategy plan.

We have a situation in this province where the numbers of suicides have climbed — and this is directly connected to the issues of Sixties Scoop survivors, of residential school survivors, of people who have experienced past and intergenerational trauma in this province. If you look in northern Saskatchewan, the rates of suicide are climbing. If you compare First Nations boys to the rest of the population, over six times as much. When we talk about young women and girls in our province, the likelihood of them taking their lives is nearly 30 times as high as someone in the rest of the province. And yet this government has

refused to take any action on a suicide strategy.

Today they have an option. Today they have a chance to change. Will they support the motion and the bill put forward by the member from Cumberland?

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

Hon. Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, as I've stated in this House many times, this government, and I know the members of the opposition, take suicide very seriously, especially when we see young children taking their lives, Mr. Speaker.

To say that we have no strategy is just not correct, Mr. Speaker. We have the 10-year mental health and addictions action plan, which a number of those initiatives are either under way or in the process of being under way, Mr. Speaker. We look . . . The Premier touched in estimates yesterday on a number of different points, whether it's mental health first aid trainers, which has now trained over 2,700 individuals, the police and crisis teams, the Kids Help Phone.

Mr. Speaker, I'd point out as well, the FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations] suicide strategy that was presented by Vice-chief David Pratt is something that we take very seriously and we've discussed that with him. I know the Minister of Health and myself have talked to the vice-chief about these issues as well. Mr. Speaker, it's a very important document, and if we look at the strategy, the notes in there, a lot of those have been implemented through the 10-year mental health and addictions action plan. There's a lot of alignment there, Mr. Speaker.

And we look at that FSIN strategy as well, Mr. Speaker. It speaks to a federal, a provincial, and even local level of involvement in that, Mr. Speaker. We're very serious on these issues and we'll continue to pursue those initiatives through this government.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Government's Efforts to Balance Budget

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure and an honour to stand to talk about the '19-20 budget of this government and one that I'm very proud of, Mr. Speaker. It's a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker, with a \$34.4 million surplus. And it hasn't been an easy path to get back to balance, Mr. Speaker, after the loss of \$1.2 billion in resource revenue that nobody could predict and which we have rebounded from.

First I want to talk about a few of the, I think, more interesting ministries and how they are affected in a positive fashion by this budget, Mr. Speaker. Advanced Education is one I want to start with. And this strikes the right balance, this budget, by maintaining operating grants to Saskatchewan's universities and technical schools. The Ministry of Advanced Education will invest \$728 million to ensure that Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions are sustainable now and into the

future.

[11:00]

Some of the key highlights in Advanced Education, Mr. Speaker: maintaining operating grants to the universities and technical schools, funding of \$88 million for the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan, increasing funding for student financial assistance program, and ensuring that students can get help when they pursue their post-secondary studies.

The government will provide \$673 million in operating and capital grants to post-secondary institutions, including the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Regina federated and affiliated colleges, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies and the Gabriel Dumont Institute, regional colleges. Mr. Speaker, I think that pretty much covers the institutions that are positively affected by this increased funding. But I should mention that it's also \$7 million for scholarships such as the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship and the Saskatchewan Innovation and Opportunity Scholarship, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about agriculture a little bit. And you know, the Agriculture budget is \$391.3 million. This funding ensures that programming to support the success of our agriculture industry will continue, and the budget fully funds business risk management programs and sustains investments in agricultural research. This encourages our agricultural sector to continue to grow. And while these programs are in place, Mr. Speaker, it permits and it allows our producers to take the tremendous financial risks that they take every year to continue to be able to be our number one export and generator of economic activity in the province, Mr. Speaker.

And I point out, Mr. Speaker, that that \$391.3 million budget is a 30 per cent increase from the highest budget that the NDP has ever had for Agriculture, and I'm pretty proud of that.

An Hon. Member: — Do they know what farmers are?

Mr. Stewart: — Actually, you know, there is nobody on that side of the floor that understands modern agriculture. There is not one single MLA that has an understanding of the way farming is conducted these days, actually on farms that are of commercial size and use modern techniques, Mr. Speaker. And they continue to prove that every single day.

You know, speaking of agriculture, I remember how the NDP treated the agricultural sector. I was a young farmer struggling along with a family and lots of debt. And you know, the time when GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] program came out, it was a fed-prov program. And I remember it was tough times, Mr. Speaker, very, very difficult times in agriculture, and I remember what happened when GRIP was available to farmers in the rest of the country.

I remember that the NDP, after we had signed, after we had signed our contracts for the GRIP program, Mr. Speaker — the producers had signed the contracts — they tore them up. And they went to the Supreme Court of Canada and got a judgment that said that it was in the interest of the province for them to do that. And so that's the difference, Mr. Speaker. This minister and

this government cares about agriculture, and we recognize how important it is to the province.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think I'm going to go into the numerous improvements to the crop insurance program and so on, but I think I want to instead use a little bit of my time to move on to — let's see, which one will we pick here? — oh, education. We hear a lot about education in this room sometimes, Mr. Speaker, and very seldom anything positive from that side of the floor.

The provincial government supports Saskatchewan students by increasing funding for classrooms, libraries, community-based organizations, early learning programs in this budget. The 2019-20 budget provides \$2.48 billion — that's with a "b," Mr. Speaker — for the Ministry of Education to support those things. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to make this particular point if I don't make any other points that actually stick in anybody's memory, but this budget represents a 209 per cent increase over the NDP's largest spend on education . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Now the member thinks we're spending too much on education. I don't know, I think teachers would disagree.

Saskatchewan's 27 school divisions will receive \$1.9 billion in school operating funding under this budget, Mr. Speaker. And of course it's, if I can use the term, block funding; it has no strings attached to it. There's a formula that dictates how much money each of the school divisions gets from our budget spending and they allocate it as they see fit, Mr. Speaker. And you know, the grants to classrooms are 1.7 billion, and school operating funds, 26.2 million over last year's \$1.87 billion budget, an addition to classroom learning, Mr. Speaker. School infrastructure investments will increase by nearly \$20 million this year over last year's total of 95.6 million, Mr. Speaker. And I think, you know, that sort of covers the highlights of the education budget, Mr. Speaker, without going into too much detail.

I'm boring the members opposite. I see they don't seem particularly interested in hearing some facts about education. They want to talk about us not spending enough. But 209 per cent increase over their biggest education budget isn't bad, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's something that we can be pretty proud of over here.

In health, Mr. Speaker, the total investment in health in this budget is \$5.89 billion, Mr. Speaker. That's an increase of \$123 million over last year. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't think I need to go into much detail on how much good that \$123 million increase can do for the health of the people of Saskatchewan. And being one who has had some experience in the system, Mr. Speaker, I think that we have plenty to be proud of here, and this budget enhances the great system that we already have. And congratulations to the minister and others who made that happen, Mr. Speaker.

Social services, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about that. You know, I usually like to talk about the initiatives we have to attract investment and things of that nature, but I think it's time that we heard from somebody like me who is more involved in the harder issues, about what I think about things like Saskatchewan's social services programs and our education and our advanced education and health.

And in social services, Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty proud of this, and

I think the people of Saskatchewan are pretty happy with it too. The budget provides \$1.43 billion in social services and assistance, an increase of \$51.4 million compared to last year, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that number is 92 per cent higher than the NDP's highest ever social services spend, even in their final budget that was criticized for drawing down on their rainy day fund by 500, roughly, million dollars to finance their spending then.

Mr. Speaker, this budget will do great things for those among us who are less advantaged. I think any government, you know, I think will be judged by how we treat those who are less advantaged in our jurisdictions, and I'm proud that this budget treats them very well, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, a budget can be judged by the positive reactions. I have a sheaf of them here, Mr. Speaker, and I'll read one or two. Mr. Speaker, let's see, John Hopkins, Regina Chamber of Commerce. Here's what he had to say. John said:

Well I think again from a chamber perspective, one of the important things we were looking for is there a plan to balance or is there a balanced budget. In the case of the provincial government, there is a balanced budget and that's important. In the case of the federal government, there isn't even a plan to balance the budget, so we're very concerned about that.

"Always great. Always a treat to walk up to this building. Congratulations to Minister Harpauer and the Government of Saskatchewan on achieving a balanced budget," Sask Realtors Association.

Marilyn Braun-Pollon, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said:

Business owners really looking for three things from the government to balance the budget with sustainable spending and to avoid tax hikes, so certainly they'll be pleased that this budget is balanced. One of the few in the country. Actually one of four provinces that have balanced a budget.

You know, I could go on and on with that, Mr. Speaker. I want to compare that to the reactions to the NDP's last budget. Here's what Bruce Johnstone had to say:

Nearly double-digit spending increases, softening revenues and an apparent deficit of close to \$500 million. [This has been one of their balanced budgets, so they claim] . . . business and taxpayer groups questioning the sustainability of the NDP government's fiscal plan.

"It's unsustainable," said David MacLean of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, referring to Finance minister Andrew Thomson's budget announcement.

Mr. Speaker, let's see who else do we have here, Mr. Speaker, that had comments on the 2007-08 budget that the NDP brought down. Here's what Murray Mandryk had to say, Mr. Speaker. I'll just read a line or two. The numbers in Thursday's budget really . . . \$8.35 billion in spending is the deficit.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to move the motion, and the

motion reads:

That this Assembly commends the government's work over the past three years to ensure that the 2019-20 budget would be balanced with no new taxes and no tax increases.

I am honoured to move this motion, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Lumsden-Morse:

That this Assembly commends the government's work over the past three years to ensure that the 2019-20 budget would be balanced with no new taxes and no tax increases.

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

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say I find it passing strange, the wording that there is no tax increases, given this year's budget. You know, Mr. Speaker, when you change the tax rules and it results in more money coming into the treasury, that's what most people call a tax increase.

So, Mr. Speaker, what are those tax increases? Well ask the potash companies whether there was a tax increase. Ask people who will be using our provincial parks this year whether there was a tax increase. Ask people who have leases from the government, from the Ministry of Environment. Ask the peat companies who are mining the peat bogs, ask them if there was tax increases. How about a 1,500 per cent tax increase, Mr. Speaker? Those are tax increases.

[11:15]

And you know, it's interesting, Mr. Speaker. This is talking about the government's record over the past three years. There were some other tax increases there, Mr. Speaker. You know, tax increase on children's clothing. Tax increase on snack foods and restaurant meals. Tax increase on construction. Tax increases on municipalities. Tax increases on used cars. Tax increases on Energy Star appliances. Tax increases on marijuana. Tax increases on farm fuel. Tax increases, tax increases, tax increases, Mr. Speaker. So I have to say I find the wording of the motion passing strange.

Mr. Speaker, but don't just take it from me. Let's hear what some other people have had to say about this government's record on budgeting. Let's hear what Marilyn Braun-Pollon — you know, the socialist that she is — from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business had to say: "It's brutal from a small business perspective."

Or, Mr. Speaker, what did the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] president, Peter Stoicheff, have to say? "It's probably the largest single budget cut we've ever had in our history."

Or let's hear what Pat Maze, president of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, has had to say about this government's decisions over the past three year: "We're already at the bare bones. There is no way to escape it. There will be cuts in the classroom."

Mr. Speaker, what did Bob Hawkins, a former Sask Party candidate, have to say, and now a city of Regina councillor? “This is a budget that comes like a thief in the night.”

Or how about the mayor of North Battleford, Mr. Speaker, Ryan Bater: “Well outrage is putting it lightly. We were absolutely blindsided by this budget.”

Or how about . . . Oh, I missed. Marilyn Braun-Pollon had another quote to say, Mr. Speaker: “This is probably the highest, the biggest tax hike we’ve ever seen among Saskatchewan’s history.”

Or how about this one, Mr. Speaker, from the Saskatoon & Region Home Builders’ Association, from the CEO [chief executive officer] of that organization: “It’s going to have a huge impact on affordability.”

Mr. Speaker, the University of Regina Students’ Union president had this to say: “It’s like the government lives in an alternate reality. They don’t understand the struggles that people are faced with.”

Or how about this from Peter Gilmer, the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry: “If we’re going to make cuts towards the most vulnerable people in our province, we think it adds insult to injury to be looking at corporate tax cuts and tax cuts to the wealthy.”

Or how about this from the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*: “After hurting the poorest of the poor in our province, this government brought in a tax cut for corporations.”

Or how about this, Mr. Speaker — again talking about the three-year legacy of this government — from Murray Mandryk, the *Regina Leader-Post* columnist: “This cements debt as one of Wall’s legacies.”

Mr. Speaker, this is what we have from a smattering of other people who are not NDP. This is what they have to say about this government’s choices over the past three years. But, Mr. Speaker, you know, the former member — or the member who spoke before me; he’s still a current member — you know, he seemed to take some issue with the knowledge of agriculture on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about cuts. And I want to ask that member whether . . . on the members on that side of the House what they know about Christianity. Because, Mr. Speaker, what I know about the Bible is that we are supposed to have compassion and help for the poor and needy. And, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the budgeting track record of this government over the past three years, I see cuts and cuts and cuts targeted at the most needy in our province.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at the loss of the STC, the Saskatchewan Transportation Company . . . Mr. Speaker, the people in our province who are able-bodied, who have income, they have vehicles. The people who relied on STC were the disabled, the people who didn’t have money for gas, who didn’t have money to have their own vehicle. Mr. Speaker, those were the people hurt by the loss of STC.

Mr. Speaker, when I was out canvassing in my constituency, I met a grandmother who was just . . . she was at tears telling me about how her granddaughter was in grade 12 and was about to graduate from grade 12 out in rural Saskatchewan, and she just didn’t know how she was going to be able to get there because she couldn’t drive herself. She didn’t have family members that she could turn to. She didn’t have a vehicle. And she would have really liked to have had the option of taking the bus, the bus that no longer existed.

An Hon. Member: — Yens, that’s a stretch.

Mr. Pedersen: — Mr. Speaker, there’s a member over there who seems to think that that was a stretch. Mr. Speaker, if that member would like to come with me, I can take him to that exact house after we adjourn here today, Mr. Speaker. Because it’s not a stretch. It’s not a stretch that people who needed to go to their medical appointments, people who are on social services, it’s not a stretch for them. They were already stretched taking the bus, Mr. Speaker, and now they were left, in the words of the Minister of SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], they could just hitchhike. That was this government’s solution, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, these cuts hurt the lowest of the low. These budgeting decisions took away funeral services for people on social assistance. Mr. Speaker, they cut libraries. They took away the rental housing supplement. They took away hearing aids. Mr. Speaker, when you cut the services for people . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order, please. I recognize the member.

Mr. Pedersen: — Mr. Speaker, when you have someone who is disabled, on social assistance, and you take money out of their pocket, Mr. Speaker, that’s hurting the lowest of the low. Mr. Speaker, those are people who are living in poverty through no fault of their own. They have medical disabilities. And when you’re taking money out of their pockets, that’s really low. That’s low and it’s petty. Mr. Speaker, and like the Anti-Poverty Ministry said, at the same time, in that same budget, when you hand out a tax cut, when you give out money to the wealthiest people in our province, that shows what your budgeting choices are. That shows where your heart is.

Mr. Speaker, when I think of the jobs and the cuts and the hurt to the city of Regina — the 3.5 per cent attack on the public service, a 3.5 per cent wage-cut attack on the public service; when I think about the Crown jobs and the government jobs that have been lost; when I think about the PST [provincial sales tax] on construction, Mr. Speaker, the \$800 more per year that families are paying with the PST in this province, Mr. Speaker — I wonder how there’s anyone in the city of Regina who could still support this government when I think about the cuts to this city. And, Mr. Speaker, with that I’d like to conclude my remarks and just say I do not support this motion.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D’Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it’s a pleasure to rise today to speak about the right balance. Mr. Speaker, as the longest-serving member of this Legislative Assembly, I have a sense of the history of this place and I think

about the past, the present, and the future. And at one time, Mr. Speaker, the NDP, while being left, were still fiscally prudent. That is no longer the case with today's NDP. Every day they demand more spending, more debt, and fewer taxes. I can support the fewer taxes side.

Mr. Speaker, in listening to the previous member from Regina Northeast I found it quite interesting, a number of his comments. And I thought since he went back three years to a previous budget, I would go back perhaps a little bit further to March 19th *Globe and Mail* of 1993, Mr. Speaker. And I would like to quote from that article:

Premier Roy Romanow's government slashed its annual deficit in half by grabbing \$200 million more from the taxpayers while curbing spending by \$100 million. Finance Minister Janice MacKinnon boosted the provincial sales tax to 9 per cent, effective today.

Nine per cent. That's perhaps something the member from Regina Dewdney should keep in . . . not Regina Dewdney, Regina . . .

An Hon. Member: — Northeast.

Mr. D'Autremont: — No, no.

An Hon. Member: — Rosemont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Rosemont should keep in mind. I can't even remember his name, he's so irrelevant.

Mr. Speaker, in outline: sweeping cuts in grants to hospitals, schools, and municipalities, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite completely forget their history. Their new Leader of the Opposition has no sense of the history of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this article goes on to comment on the cuts to the provincial prescription drug plan. But let's keep this a little bit in context, Mr. Speaker. This year we're talking about a budget of greater than \$15.5 billion — \$15.5 billion. Janice MacKinnon and the NDP raised taxes by 200 million and cut 100 million out of programming. And to quote, here she says, "This year, 1993-94, we raised \$4.6 billion and spent 4.9 billion." A third of the budget of today.

A \$200 million increase then would be equivalent to a \$600 million increase today, and a cut of \$300 million to services, Mr. Speaker. But even more important, as expected, spending was slashed in health, education, where budgets were chopped — this would be important for the member from Regina Lakeview to hear — budgets were chopped in health by 2.8 per cent and education, Mr. Speaker, by 4 per cent. Not an increase that didn't meet what their demands were, this was a cut of 4 per cent and the members opposite completely forget their entire history.

And, Mr. Speaker, the article goes on to say the province's budget plan was tightened for a projected savings of \$29 million a year and free dental care for schoolchildren was cut entirely, Mr. Speaker. And the municipalities were equally hit, and a quote from Ms. MacKinnon was, "By far the most serious threat to our

budget plan is the federal government." Again I'd not necessarily disagree with that in current context. And it says, "We simply cannot afford more offloading," which is exactly what the province did to the municipalities in that budget, Mr. Speaker. They slashed their transfers by 60-some per cent and today we are giving our municipalities over 200 per cent more than what they were receiving previously.

Why do we need balanced budgets? Well, Mr. Speaker, balanced budgets are very important because (a) it keeps our credit rating high. That allows us to pay a lower interest rate on the debt that we do have, and that debt started under the NDP, Mr. Speaker, in the 1970s, and has grown ever since then. It also allows us to borrow at a cheaper rate, Mr. Speaker, and the one thing that you find very interesting about bankers is they always want to lend to people who don't need the money.

[11:30]

Mr. Speaker, we also need to balance the budget so that we do not burden the future citizens and taxpayers with services that have already been used up. Mr. Speaker, we need to pay for the services we receive today with today's taxes and not pass those costs on for the benefits we receive to future generations, and that's exactly what deficit financing does. And we need to have lower interest payments, Mr. Speaker, so that we can invest in those things that we need to build for the future like highways, Mr. Speaker, like new hospitals, like new schools, all of which we have been doing. All of which are capital costs that we have indeed borrowed money for to build for the future because the people who will utilize those highways, those hospitals, and those schools are in the future, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, why did we end up in this position? Well because we had a loss of over \$1 billion in resource revenues in '15-16. Yes, and the member opposite stood in his place every day demanding that we take trucks off of Dewdney highway and build the bypass. And now when it's built, he does nothing but complain about it, Mr. Speaker, nothing but complain about it. But he hasn't been raising the issue of trucks on Dewdney Avenue ever since that bypass was built, Mr. Speaker. So I understand the role of opposition, and consistency is not one of the demands of the role of opposition, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have so much more I would like to say, but we are running out of time.

So we had three options available to us when the resource industries dropped. We could have simply slashed services. We needed over a billion dollars. We could've completely eliminated social services. We could've eliminated a third of the funding for education. And we could've eliminated 25 per cent of the funding for health, and that would've dealt with the deficit. But we chose not to do that. Another option would have simply been to deficit finance, like the members opposite want, because they keep wanting to spend more and more and more money. Every day they make those demands.

Or we could have a plan to get back to a balanced budget in a process, Mr. Speaker, and this we did. We had a budget deficit of 685 million, then 380 million, and this year a \$35 million surplus, or \$40 million surplus, Mr. Speaker. So we did it in a prescribed and reasonable manner to get us back to a balanced budget so that the future will be secure for our descendants, Mr.

Speaker.

Balanced budgets, Mr. Speaker, are a necessity. They're not a luxury. Thank you.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I always appreciate getting into the debates with the senior statespeople of the House. And I appreciate the interesting history the members have.

But I also appreciate, you know, here we have a government motion in front of us where they . . . And as I've said before, they tie themselves in knots to pat themselves on the back for it. And we can go through the list, and if I have time I'll reiterate some of the points that . . . Whether it was cutting the chaplaincy service in hospitals that they feel quite fine about doing, cutting the funding for funerals for people living in low-income situations, and they've come back a little bit about that. If they take a lot of pride in that, I guess that's the way it goes.

But you know, I have to say just this time . . . Particularly the member from Cannington spent — he gets 10 minutes to talk about congratulating himself, but really what he wants to do is condemn us — spent five minutes, 37 seconds talking about us, actually talking about Romanow. I mean I don't know what the deal is, Mr. Speaker, but that's not the resolution.

And neither one of them, neither one of them actually skated near the last part of the motion which is really the laughable part about the motion where there is — and I have a hard time reading this, Mr. Speaker, without chuckling a bit — “. . . with no new taxes and no tax increases.”

You know, as my colleague said, ask the potash companies if there's no new taxes. I don't know if the member from Lumsden paid attention to that part of the deal. Ask the people who have leases from Environment if there's no new increases here. Ask the people who are going to be going to the parks, are there going to be any increases there?

Now really whether we're spinning or what we're doing over here or where, you know, we're using spin from whoever in the backroom there talking about taxes, but people are saying there is things that are going up. And you know, the billion dollar tax grab from the working people here in Saskatchewan, how you people over there can even say that with a straight face — no new taxes. Unbelievable. You've cut services.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know the laughable part, I have to say, from the member of Cannington and his recollection of history, it's like a jigsaw puzzle. You know, he skated back to the '90s and then he even mentioned the '70s, forgot all about the '80s.

Now I know these guys are really hell-bent on rewriting history here, but it's like they have amnesia about the '80s and what happened to the '80s. You know, we do recognize the tight budgets that Mr. Romanow and Ms. MacKinnon had to put forward, but clearly there was a reason. And you know it was a sad day, I have to tell you, a sad day in our party when we cut the dental program for children because that was such a success and we look forward to the day that that's reinstated because we

know it had positive impacts on children's health.

But, Mr. Speaker, there was a reason for it. The cuts had happened because of the ineptitude of the conservatives over there, and we see the rise of conservatism in that side. When a government can be cutting the things like they cut, that they cut, and not feel bad about at all, we have a real issue with that.

You know, and again with the member from Cannington just sort of skating over or glossing over it, he talks about how good it is, be balanced and all of that. And if you believe this budget is balanced, they claim, they proclaim something like 30 million, and I think that evaporated that afternoon when people said, if we're going to have a balanced budget in school divisions around this province, we're going to have to dig into our reserves, Mr. Speaker.

There's no balanced budget in this province this year. There is not. And, Mr. Speaker, you can go to all of the organizations that are related to this government, and how many of them are digging into their reserves because they are required to balance their budget?

And of course, the member from Cannington again, he talks like — my speech will be about the member of Cannington, I think — but when he talks about offloading, and he'd say . . . You know, and these folks over here are so proud of themselves for not offloading on the municipalities, except for that one little issue around the PST on construction labour and how much they're going to get back from that. Mr. Speaker, they're giving with one hand and clawing back mightily with the other.

But the one thing I want to highlight, of course, is what we're paying in debt servicing here because of the debt that this government is going into. I understand that it's around a billion dollars that we'll be paying to the banks just on the interest on the loans that this government is racking up.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have to say, I have to say that it's a little rich coming from that side over there to congratulate themselves on a day when we talked about the Sixties Scoop, and the folks were up here, and they just want action from the government. That's all they want. They appreciated the apology from the government side. They appreciated the people sitting in on the healing circles, all of that. But they want action. They want action.

And I think they deserve that. They deserve knowing who the homes were that they lived in. Perhaps there's good stories; perhaps there's not good stories. But they deserve, they're the ones in it. And the government hiding behind privacy of these people, it's part of their story too. They have a right to know. They have a right to know. And they have a right to know and to get their records.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are concerned about that. We're seeing things today that we should be debating about. We should be debating about the number of kids who are living in poverty in this province. We should be all for eradicating poverty here in Saskatchewan. I don't know any member in this House who would say, you know, it's just about right.

You know, when you have any kid going to school who's dealing with poverty, we've got an issue. Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, there

was a demonstration of parents outside the legislature. We talked a lot about people attending demonstrations. Well here we had families outside talking about their experiences. Mr. Speaker, was the Minister of Health or the associate minister out there explaining the situation? No, they decided not to attend. Here people are coming and they want to talk about it here, right now.

And, Mr. Speaker, again I think all of these things are things we can all agree with, and one is around the crystal meth strategy. And you know, the member from Lumsden would remember this and would remember how forcefully, I think it was the member from Kelvington in that time, and I'll use her name, June Draude, fought hard, fought hard for us to do work around crystal meth. I remember that in 2005 and '06 and '07. She was a real champion on that.

But it's gone radio silence over there, Mr. Speaker. They're not talking about that at all. And, Mr. Speaker, today my colleague from Cumberland will raise a very, very important issue around youth strategy and calling for a strategy, a plan, something that we can say we're all for. And that's the kind of thing that we should be debating. But not these folks over here, they want to tie themselves in knots congratulating themselves.

And I have to say, right off the bat, I'll be just remiss if I don't mention STC. STC was a jewel and was something about how we connected in this province with our friends, our families, whether it be Christmastime or Easter time, summer holidays, grandkids going to visit grandparents, or even more importantly, people going for medical appointments or funerals or weddings. And, Mr. Speaker, there was a challenge, do we know anybody who's had to hitchhike? Well we had a fellow here from La Ronge, Gary Tinker, who said he was out . . . And here you have the case.

Now was there something we could have done to improve STC? Maybe there was. Maybe there were things that we could have taken a look, but if you starve a fruit on the vine, it will not flourish. And here was a case where you saw this government out for a Crown like they're out for so many Crown companies that they in fact are starving them to death so they won't flourish.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think it's a little rich that when we talk about congratulating this government, balanced is a joke in itself, but the idea that it's no new taxes or no new tax increases is laughable. As I said and my member from Regina Northeast said, you know, you ask the potash corporations if they felt a little surprised that afternoon about the increase they were saying.

And I don't know whether the member from Martensville was even paying attention, you know. She's in her own little world. And you hear her every once in a while chirp up. But those businesses are very, very important to our economy and yet they're taxing them, the leases, all of those things, Mr. Speaker.

And let's bring back STC. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to join in what will likely be my last 75-minute debate in this Chamber. And you know, I have some

points I want to put on the record. I'm going to do some comparing and contrasting of our record with the former government's record across the way.

[11:45]

But to have a member from Saskatoon Centre stand up and laud the potash companies and say that we have done wrong by the potash companies after they're the one that nationalized them, it makes me . . . It's laughable to have the member from Saskatoon Centre stand up and talk about business and opportunities and the private sector when I honestly think he thinks private sector's a bad word. So to actually listen to him say that was quite an interesting turn of events. And I'll get to some of the comments by my colleague from Regina Northeast in a few minutes.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to be able to follow two of our sage, as the member from Saskatoon Centre said, our sage colleagues: the member from Lumsden-Morse and the member from Cannington. It's always a pleasure to listen to their history. I know it is a bit different than the history from the member from Athabasca. And maybe somewhere in between is where truth meets the road.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very interesting to have these debates about budgets. And honestly, when you go back into history, you do have to compare the last budget of an NDP government in 2006 with our budget this year, and that's something I'll be happy to do. I'll run through a few of the numbers right now.

And the member from Saskatoon Centre and the member from Regina Northeast want to talk about public debt. Well here's the numbers: in 2008 the public operating debt was \$6.8 billion; in 2020 the public operating debt will be \$6.2 billion. Lower, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's lower. Crown corporation debt in 2008, 3.4; in 2020, 9.7. That's higher. You know why that's higher, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Because we have to invest in infrastructure.

It's something the members opposite never did in our Crown corporations. And I remember lots of stories of rolling brownouts during the lean years of the NDP. They did not invest in infrastructure. I know one year they were proud of one of their budgets. They invested \$250 million in infrastructure. On this side, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have invested on average \$1 billion a year in Crown infrastructure to make sure the people of the province get the services and the reliability that they deserve, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Capital plan infrastructure: 1.6 in 2008; in 2020, it's going to be 1.1. Once again, I believe the people of the province want us to invest in their infrastructure, want safer roads, want better schools, want new hospitals, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they deserve that. And that's why we'll continue to invest money into infrastructure across our province because that's what the citizens of this province expect and deserve.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a few more interesting fun facts for the members opposite that I'd like to draw the comparisons of. He talked about the debt-servicing charge, the member from Saskatoon, and he threw out some numbers that I'm pretty sure he knew weren't accurate. But in 2006-07 the debt charge was \$783 million a year. In 2019-2020 our debt charges will be

\$694.4 million a year. That is \$88.6 million lower, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Let me repeat that for the member from Saskatoon Centre: \$88.6 million lower a year in debt-servicing charges.

Mr. Speaker, in 2006-07 the percentage of total spending of our debt was 8.4; 2019-2020, 5. Mr. Speaker, that's 3.4 lower. Mr. Deputy Speaker, our debt as percentage of GDP [gross domestic product]: 1.7 in '06-07; in 2019-2020, 1. Hmm. Lower once again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Per capita debt in our province — and this is a good one because the members want to talk about per capita debt in our province — '06-07, \$789 per person; 2019-2020, \$593 per person which is \$196 per person debt in our province. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if they want to compare where we are now to where we were in 2006-07, I would love to make that comparison and I will do that comparison every day of the week, and I'm proud of the record on this side of our government.

There is some more numbers, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Just to get back to the per capita debt and everyone in the province, I wonder if that's because there's 163,000 more people living here and climbing, than there was in '06-07. And I was always a big believer that people vote with their feet, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the more people come to this province, the more they enjoy our quality of life, I think the better our province is and the stronger we are in diversity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a lot more I'd like to get to, but there is a few comments that were made across the aisle that kind of made me raise an eyebrow, especially from the member from Regina Northeast. He was kind of a walking, talking advertising for our side lately, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But when he talked about the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program and people being hurt that are the most vulnerable, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he wasn't around then. But this government on this side is the one that brought in the SAID program for people that were the most vulnerable in our province.

And he wants to talk about tears. Well I was at that announcement and talking to these people that were finally going to get some extra money to have a better quality of life, to have more dignity in what they're doing. And if you were there, member from Regina Northeast, during this announcement when we rolled out the SAID program, you would have seen people crying as well, but of joy. Because I talked to one young lady, I said, what do you think you're going to do with this, your extra money? I'm finally going to buy a bed, and she started crying — buy a bed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I talked to another young man. He said, you know what, I would actually have the option to go out and have a meal in a restaurant. I've never done that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I will take no lessons in this. I will take no lessons on how to treat the most vulnerable in this province when we did things like that. And they should actually learn some of that history, because before the SAID program there was no option for the most vulnerable people in our province. And I think that's something they'd be wise to remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Another thing, they talked about the seniors in our province and the people that helped build this province. That member gets on his feet and talks about seniors being left behind. Well 16 years they had an opportunity to increase the senior income plan. Not once, not once did they do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So once

again when they want to get on their high horse and talk about this side, our government leaving people behind, well they should because they're the best at it. They did it for 16 years and left people in this province behind without having the ability to get ahead, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It's something that is quite irritating on this side of the House, because they wrap themselves in their socialism flag and say, everyone should be treated fairly. Well they've never once done that when they had that ability, being in government. And, Mr. Speaker, I hope it's a very long time before they have that opportunity to be in government again, because they sure haven't shown any ability or had the honour to deserve that respect and represent the people of the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to end with a few comments on crises. Mr. Speaker, every day in this House I hear there's a crisis. There's a crisis in health care. There's a crisis in education. There's a crisis in post-secondary education. There's a crisis five years ago in long-term care. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not saying everything's perfect in the province of Saskatchewan. There is and will continue to be more work to be done. But I remember Bob Bjornerud said, you can say whatever you want in opposition, because it doesn't matter. Well they've really taken that to heart, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They've taken that quote to heart, especially the member from Regina Northeast, because he has said almost anything and really not cared if it was in *Hansard* or not, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But I'd say at some point in time there's going to have to be some ideas come out of that other side. There's going to have to be, other than there's a crisis, there's a crisis. They're kind of reminding me of the little boy that cries wolf, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If you scream it too often, no one's going to believe you if you actually have a valid point.

And I'm saying there is more work to be done. We have to work on wait times in ERs [emergency room]. We have to work on infrastructure in education. But from where we were in 2007 to where we are now is a far cry from there being a crisis in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know this government is going to continue to work hard and earn the right to govern and represent the people of this province.

And I can't wait to see where we go now that the budget is balanced. It was a three-year project, and there was a lot of hard work done by Minister of Finance, by the treasury board. And I'm proud to say that our team took that three-year plan, put it into action, and the budget is balanced now. And now the people of the province of Saskatchewan helped us do that good work. And the Premier and this team is going to roll out a great plan for growth over the next 10 years, and I can't wait to see how it comes to fruition. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I enter in today with really a laughable motion that's been brought before us, Mr. Speaker. And I'll certainly get to those points. But you know, really what we see is an arrogant and entitled government that's more about itself at this point, Mr. Speaker, and partisan and petty entry into this legislature. Mr.

Speaker, we're here at a time in the province where our economy's hurting, where people are struggling and we see no regard or action to fire up that economy, to respond to the unprecedented trade barriers that we're facing as a province, or to get a grip on the finances that are mortgaging the future of our province, Mr. Speaker.

When I see the members enter into this and, you know . . . Like the member from Regina Walsh Acres, it's like he's just checked out or couldn't care less, Mr. Speaker. Here we have a time in this province where we need to be standing united, to be dealing with matters important to the people of the province, at a time where we have traditional trade allies and traditional allies around the world, Mr. Speaker, who have changed that relationship and who have thrown up barriers.

We have a government that would rather try to applaud itself in a partisan way that defies the facts, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to representing the best interests of Saskatchewan people. No mention, Mr. Speaker, of the challenge that we're dealing with when we look at our very important trading ally to the south of our border with the steel tariffs that are so costly for this province and for this country. No mention of the tariffs and the trade barriers as it relates to pulses and the matter of fumigation with India, Mr. Speaker, that's been left unresolved for a full two years, Mr. Speaker, that's costing Saskatchewan businesses and that's costing this province by way of a fiscal impact as well, that's costing workers and farms across this province.

No mention, Mr. Speaker, of the trade barriers that are being thrown up in an alarming way and a way that can't be left to stand with China, as it relates to canola and as it relates to our other agricultural products, Mr. Speaker. Nothing. Nothing with respect to Italy and the trade barriers with durum, Mr. Speaker.

Nothing with the trajectory with debt, Mr. Speaker, that's not sustainable. Nothing about the recklessness that we've seen with the finances when it comes to things like the bypass, Mr. Speaker, the biggest overrun in Saskatchewan's history. No, we don't see any contrition. We don't see an effort to bring forward a united Assembly, Mr. Speaker. We hear a bunch of political noise that's partisan and self-interested, Mr. Speaker.

No effort, no voice to unite this Assembly in advancing pipeline capacity being built out, Mr. Speaker, to close that critical gap in the differential between WCS [Western Canadian Select] and WTI [West Texas Intermediate], leaving Saskatchewan people without the dollars they deserve, leaving industry, leaving jobs, leaving those in the energy sector without the support that they deserve.

Nothing there, Mr. Speaker. Nothing to talk about how are we going to respond to the current reality when it comes to the federally imposed carbon price, a reality that's for now, one that's being challenged in an important case but that's a reality in Saskatchewan and not even planned for, if you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, into this budget this last year. We see a government that's just simply not willing to take the matters that are important to this province and to its people serious, Mr. Speaker.

We hear, you know, tired old lines from tired old members. I won't refer to the member from Lumsden-Morse that way because I've got nothing but respect for that guy. We disagree

the odd time on policy. But I'll tell you this, the member from Cannington wails on and on ad nauseam, telling an old, tired story, Mr. Speaker, that people are sick and tired of hearing. But you know, I guess it'll go down as a footnote in history, both for that member and I guess also for the member from Walsh Acres, that they presided over the biggest deficit in Saskatchewan's history, that they've presided over the biggest debt in Saskatchewan's history, you know — and get this, Mr. Speaker — that the member from Cannington and the member from Walsh Acres presided over the biggest tax increase in the history of Saskatchewan.

You know, two years ago, Mr. Speaker, this government and the people of Saskatchewan faced a slowing economy and some external pressures that were causing a real challenge for this province. In face of that slowing economy, this government slammed on the brakes. They imposed a PST increase, Mr. Speaker, on Saskatchewan people that has hamstrung our economy, that has hurt businesses and killed jobs all across this province, and it's in fact a doubling of the take of the PST. One billion dollars by way of an increase, Mr. Speaker. And it's absolutely hammered our construction sector, where we see projects that are important to Saskatchewan people being shelved day after day, big projects for industry and business, small projects on the residential side that all add up and matter. And the result of that is permits are down all across our province. There's no balance in this, and it really hurts the economic recovery that we need, Mr. Speaker.

[12:00]

Another consequence of this is that thousands of Saskatchewan people have lost their jobs. Tradespeople, Mr. Speaker, in the area of construction, many others that have lost their jobs because of the hurt from the PST. And those workers . . . And I've seen it all too often with those that I serve in Regina Rosemont. The window is short for consideration to find that next job, and then the change has to happen. And I've lost far too many constituents in the last couple of years who have had to leave, who have had to put the for sale sign up in front of their house, who have had to leave this province in pursuit of employment, who have had to have their families often torn apart, Mr. Speaker, because of the ham-handed approach to the economy by this government.

The PST that the member from Walsh Acres and Cannington imposed, the biggest tax increase in Saskatchewan's history, has hurt households and hurt families. It's increased the cost of living by way of PST alone, Mr. Speaker, to the tune of \$800 a year more in just a five-year period, Mr. Speaker. That's flattened our economy. If you look at things like retail sales, people haven't had the extra dollar in their pocket to spend. It's been completely flat. When you factor in that the population has been growing in that time, that means that this is more than flat; it's a decline in spending. They've presided over and created a stagnant economy, Mr. Speaker.

The people of this province deserve so much better. They deserve investments where they count and where they make a difference and where they save lives and they save dollars, when it comes to mental health and addictions within the province, a meth crisis that's ravaging lives and communities, Mr. Speaker, and that's costing us not just lives but real dollars. They deserve investments where they count to build that future economy, that

future Saskatchewan, right into the foundation of that future in education, in our classrooms, Mr. Speaker, that have been robbed of the resources they need to do what they can for our future.

And we need a government to respond and step up to the trade barriers that are unprecedented when we look at the United States, when we look at China, when we look at India, Mr. Speaker, when we look at Italy, and we could go on, to resolve these matters and make sure that Saskatchewan people and our businesses, as exporters to the world, have access to those very critical markets. And we expect that our government would step up to the plate when it comes to the economy and remove that PST that's causing so much damage, Mr. Speaker, fire up good investment and renewable power, fix the procurement model to ensure local jobs. So I certainly won't be supporting this nonsense motion that's been put forward before us here today.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, as I said, I was listening to all the three speeches, and not one of them actually skated close to that part of the motion that talked about no new taxes and no tax increases. So I have to ask the member from Cannington: doesn't he think it's pretty rich that they're celebrating no new taxes when this government has taken \$1.7 billion of brand new taxes from the people of Saskatchewan in the last two years? How does he feel about that?

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate that question. We just heard the member from Regina Rosemont decrying increases in deficit, accusing us of having the biggest debt ever. So, Mr. Speaker, there is a solution to that: increased taxes, Mr. Speaker, is one of the solutions to reducing deficit and debt. But both members that spoke want to have less debt and less taxes. You cannot do that, Mr. Speaker. It's one or the other: deficits, or increase taxes, Mr. Speaker. We chose a program of both, and we're now at balanced budgets.

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite voted against our balanced budget, with no new taxes and no tax increases. The Leader of the Opposition recently shared in an article that said that our government shouldn't be proud of Saskatchewan's low taxes and instead suggested that we should raise taxes.

Mr. Speaker, low taxes help us to make life affordable for families and businesses. In fact, 112,000 Saskatchewan residents have been removed from the provincial income tax roll entirely, and a family of four pays no income tax on their first 51,600 of income.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from Regina Northeast: do you agree with your leader that low personal income taxes are a bad thing for Saskatchewan families?

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

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well of course now I've heard from the government; I've heard many members say that they'll take no lessons from us, but perhaps they should pay attention, Mr. Speaker, because taxes are how we pay for public services.

Mr. Speaker, that's how we pay for our roads and our schools and our hospitals, Mr. Speaker, and those are good things. So, Mr. Speaker, you know, this motion again, as I have said, as my colleagues have said, this motion is laughable, the idea that there's been no new tax increases, Mr. Speaker. You know, when the member from Batoche is pointing his finger, there's three fingers pointing right back at him.

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

Ms. Sproule: — We hear a lot of talk from this government about how great their fiscal performance has been, but really what we see is a tripling of the debt, a doubling of the PST, and over \$1 billion being paid right now this year in interest charges, Mr. Speaker. So to the member from Cannington: can he explain how he thinks a billion dollars in interest alone is helping the province of Saskatchewan?

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a significant portion of the debt that we're paying interest on was started by the NDP. In 1991 there was six and a half billion dollars of debt at 20 per cent interest rate, Mr. Speaker. You do the calculation and it becomes astronomical. Mr. Speaker, we have indeed added to that debt since we formed government, since the oil and resource prices crashed by over a billion dollars, but what did we spend it on? Not on operations, Mr. Speaker. We spent it on capital projects which build for the future — highways, hospitals, long-term care — while the NDP . . . And schools, don't forget schools. While the NDP were in government they closed hospitals, closed schools, and closed long-term care facilities.

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

Mr. Steele: — Mr. Speaker, this government has made great strides in the last three years of bringing the budget to balance. The members opposite can think what they want, but the facts are clear. The budget is balanced and the right balance for Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from Regina Northeast. If the member truly believes that they are the government-in-waiting, why haven't they presented an economic plan for Saskatchewan in the past three years?

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

Mr. Pedersen: — Mr. Speaker, I'll take the opportunity to actually talk about a plan that we have proposed, a plan called Renew Saskatchewan, a plan, Mr. Speaker, that will not only address this government's shameful record on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but will actually create thousands of new jobs in rural Saskatchewan where they are needed, Mr.

Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's showing leadership of what we can do to address both our climate change problem and the problem of the job losses that this government has caused in our economy.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know the member for Walsh Acres saw the writing on the wall provincially, heading out to run in federal politics. He's the nominated candidate in Regina-Lewvan, Mr. Speaker. He's had a record of the biggest, you know, tax increases in Saskatchewan's history, tried to sell off the Crowns, Mr. Speaker. I could go on but I won't.

What I want to know, actually, is that this province doesn't get a fair shake when it comes to equalization. New Democrats have always fought in this province to get a better deal, a fair deal on equalization. And I want to hear a clear position from the member from Walsh Acres. He's not two different people. He's both the candidate federally and he's also the MLA for Walsh Acres. What's his position on equalization?

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

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. First and foremost, I'd like to thank the member from Rosemont for taking a lawn sign in October of 2019 for the federal campaign. Second of all, I'd like to thank the member from Regina Rosemont for once again bringing up important issues for the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

I will be against a federal carbon tax, which they are not. I will be in favour of building pipelines, which he spoke about, but they never had a firm position. I will be in favour of making sure Saskatchewan people get a fair deal if I'm able to represent them in Ottawa when the time comes.

And last but not least, I'd like to congratulate the member from Regina Rosemont for being the longest serving New Democrat MLA to never sit on the government benches.

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

Mr. Buckingham: — Mr. Speaker, when the economy is strong, the opportunities are endless. What is even more important is that our government has been able to increase spending in health, social services, and education by 67 per cent since forming government, while continuing to keep taxes low. This is the path to success, Mr. Speaker. Yet the members opposite voted no on this balanced budget. They'll support a job-killing carbon tax but turn their backs on a strong balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the member from Regina Northeast. Why has the member opposite been silent on presenting a strong economic growth plan for Saskatchewan?

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

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr.

Speaker, what would have made a tremendous difference in the past three years in our province's finances would have been a fair deal on equalization. Mr. Speaker, I notice that the member from Walsh Acres didn't actually answer the question. He didn't answer the question on equalization. Is he afraid of it?

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — What's the MLA for Walsh Acres' position on equalization?

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

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I appreciate answering these questions on federal politics. It's a bit of a strange situation, wondering why they're not asking more about Saskatchewan issues, but I will continue to fight for a fair deal for everyone in the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I think that being a strong voice for people of the province of Saskatchewan is very important, whether it be on the carbon tax, whether it be on other government policies, whether it be on building pipelines, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I guarantee you if I do have the honour to represent the people of Regina in Ottawa, I'll work hard to ensure they get a fair deal on every policy.

The Deputy Speaker: — The time for the 75-minute debate has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 613 — *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2018*

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

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm here today to speak to Bill No. 613, *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2018*, and of course I'll move it after I'm done my comments. I'll be prepared to do what I need to do to hopefully move this bill forward.

[12:15]

Before I get into that, some of the challenges that many of our northern residents, our First Nations, our Métis citizens in this province are struggling with is suicide. Suicide is a crisis. I know some members on the other side will say, well no, quit saying about crisis. Well it is. I look at it, and I'm going to try to go through some of the comments in here and just give some and highlight some of the issues I think why, why we have such a high number of suicides and suicide rates among so many of our young people in First Nations and Métis communities and our Aboriginal population.

I mean, I don't care where a suicide happens. If it's in rural, urban, whether it's Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, it is a crisis and no family should have to go through that. And when they're

reaching out for help as a family, it's so important. But right now what I see and what we're hearing from, First Nations and Métis youth are the most affected by suicides in this province, Mr. Speaker.

There's been a lack of trust and co-operation from the Sask Party government to First Nations and Métis. And I'll talk about some of those and I'll show examples of what I believe, I believe, is causing some of the families and the communities to lose hope, and some are young people, to lose hope. I want to go into some of that and explain that, and I'm hoping that the members opposite will hear what I'm trying to say. And maybe at the end of the day I'll make some comments and we'll see where we go on this.

I know there's areas where government has come out and they've passed certain policies. They've introduced legislation without consulting First Nations and Métis people. You know, I want to give an example of this because I remember when the government introduced this, you know, the Government of Saskatchewan, First Nations and Métis consulting policy framework that they introduced on the duty to consult First Nations and Métis people in this province. It was their framework they swore by. It was the way it was going to go and it's great. It's been rejected, I believe, twice from First Nations, FSIN. It was rejected by Métis Nation. So it's just saying they were not happy they were not consulted and didn't feel they wanted to be a part of it. They wanted to come up with, here's what we think it should be. And as the First Nations and Métis people that are being impacted on the government's introduced legislation and rules, here's what we could do to help.

But it just goes to show it didn't happen. They went ahead with it and said if it triggers it, it triggers it, their framework . . . [inaudible]. So we've seen how that works and it doesn't work very well for First Nations and Métis when it comes to a government who just wants to go ahead and do what they want to do.

You know, you look at the trespassing legislation that was passed yesterday and it's moving forward through a process. And it's unfortunate, you know, First Nations have made it very clear. And I know that there's been stories out recently. And I'll look at some of the articles from Vice-chief Heather Bear who's made it very clear. You know, she said they're going to fight this and I think, you know, some of her comments that they're not going to sit back. They're going to try to reverse it. They're going to work hard, whatever they need to do. And I wish them well.

Because it just goes to show, it just goes to show how government doesn't take the seriousness and work with our First Nations and Métis. I mean, don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker, the government does like to do photo ops. They do. I see them all the time trying to get photos. Oh yes, let's have a photo op. But you know, actions speak louder than words. Actions speak louder than photos. But having said that, you know, there's many areas, and I'm going into some of the areas where I think it has put so much stress on First Nations and Métis communities and the population.

And you know, government, the list goes on. We talk about selling off lands. Government is selling off lands like you can't believe. They have sold off so much Crown lands without

consulting and talking with First Nations and Métis people about their treaty land entitlement to see any suggestions that they could make. No, they don't want to talk to them. They don't want to have anything, discussion with them. They just want to do what they want and say, you're going to like this.

That's not how it works. First Nations and Métis people are very proud. They're willing to work with governments. They will. They will work with industry. They will work with their partners. They will work with municipalities. And they will try to work in a positive way and be respectful.

But I know they're getting tired. I listen to the leaders and they're not happy with the way this government, Sask Party government, is dealing with them. You know, they see a minister who reaches out and talks about how, oh he's working and he has this relation with them. And then in the end, he turns around and talks about them and calls elected officials lobbyists. Like how do you say elected officials who have so much to add and know about the issues facing their children, their communities, their struggles, that you call them lobbyists? He should be ashamed of himself. That's exactly why we're going through the struggles we're going through.

And I see First Nations, whether it's housing, the roads, there's so many conditions that we see, Mr. Speaker. And all these things that are happening to First Nations and Métis people, it is what's causing our young people to lose hope. It is what's causing so many of our people to go into addictions.

And governments can work with opposition members. They can work with First Nations and Métis. There is a system. And you know, when I think about some of the challenges that our communities are facing, all they're asking for is the government to work with them in a meaningful way when it comes to mental health, addictions, suicide prevention. They're asking government. They're coming up with plans. And I give those, the front-line workers and those that are working and doing what they can within the First Nations and Métis communities, they are trying their best. They are doing what they can. And all they're asking is the government to work with them, help them with the resources in true partnership, allow them to speak, allow them to be heard, and work with them.

But this government just seems to want to take photos, want to say, oh we're listening. Oh yes, we met with them. We listened to them, but we're not going to be doing anything. We're just going to go on and do. We've got the plan. And that's what they come forward with, with legislation like the trespassing legislation, just totally against First Nations and Métis. Now we'll see where that goes, and I'm sure they're going to fight it in court.

But it just shows about the trust. The government says it wants to build a partnership and a relationship with First Nations and Métis people, but it's one thing after another. You see the trust and how they're frustrated, the leadership, for saying how they're being treated. And they do. They . . .

An Hon. Member: — That's shameful.

Mr. Vermette: — It is. It is very shameful. But they try, doesn't matter. I've watched it, how strong they are. They keep coming

back. Resilient, they are. They come forward and they just keep saying, we've got to keep the fight for our young people, for the culture.

Now you know, I've given examples of this. I think of communities like, First Nations communities like Stanley Mission, Montreal Lake, there's many of them. They're trying to reach out to the young people who are struggling with maybe addictions, mental health, justice, and they're trying to work. And what they're doing is they're doing on-the-land projects and they're trying to take the culture. And they're using elders and they're using services to provide to these young people and families to try to get them to see how important they are, that they are not forgotten, that your culture is important, as people, as young people you have rights, that we care about you. We want you. Be proud of your culture, your language. That's what they want so their young people don't lose hope, they don't lose hope.

But then when they're applying for leases to run these programs, the hurdles that they're put through. Yet it is explained from my understanding, Mr. Speaker. It's explained exactly what they're trying to do with these leases, that there are hurdles that they have to try to get over to try to help. It's their traditional land, their territory. It's time that this government takes that serious. Work with them, you know. And like, the list of examples and the frustration goes on and on and on.

And you look at the rates of suicide amongst First Nations and Métis. It's appalling yet we take a federal government yesterday, I want to, you know, talk a little bit about that because I don't want to lose the hope. And I just see, you know, a Member of Parliament introduced a motion and yesterday it passed unanimously — unanimously — 100 per cent on a strategy for suicide prevention that had some teeth. And they're going to move forward. That's the right thing to do. That is the right thing to do. We as legislators, we can come together and we should come together sometimes.

But again I go back to the rates of suicide and the funerals I go to. And I've said that in this House. I have been through too many. I have seen families struggle. We've all had family members who struggle with the addictions, the mental health, the suicide. Aboriginal people, but if you look at the numbers — and the leader today talked about it — for boys, it's six times higher for Aboriginal boys than non-Aboriginal boys; 28, just about 29 times higher for First Nation and Métis, Inuit girls than non-Aboriginal. Something's wrong. How can we just keep ignoring it and not responding to it as it is?

It is a crisis. Everyone, front-line workers are saying, ringing the alarm bells. But for some reason it goes on deaf ears on the government, and I don't know why. Why won't you work with front-line workers, with First Nations, with municipalities, with everyone to come forward and to find legislation that would help, would help communities, would help the health authorities, would help our health region to do the right thing, to make sure people are doing what they need when it comes to prevention, when it comes to awareness, in partnership?

I just cannot understand how any government, whether it's a cabinet minister, the Premier, members opposite, members on this side, how we honestly could not come together, Mr. Speaker, to say, you know what? We're going to work in true partnership.

We're going to pass legislation. We've done it before. We've brought legislation before that helps.

But when you see the rates of suicide within our communities in this province, you know, when we're . . . Unfortunately, those are the numbers that people talk about, record high. When you see that, it just breaks the heart to watch grandparents and parents and the people that I have come to love and respect, and to watch those community members who have to say goodbye to the young ones. Their time's not ready. Their hearts are broken. And you see young people who are out there losing hope because the government just will not work with government.

Yes, I'll give you credit. On some programs you're doing, there are things. But there's so many areas that this government has not worked in partnership with First Nations and Métis people, and the list goes on. I mean, I've got a list here that I can go on and on about the things. Why, I believe, why so many of our young people, our Aboriginal young people, are losing hope and are going and deciding to take their own lives, because of the suicide. If you look at the rates . . .

Everything that you want to talk about in Saskatchewan, most things, that when it comes to Aboriginal people, they're a very strong, very proud people. They work hard but, you know, at the end of the day they want a government to listen and hear them. They want to work. Mr. Speaker, it's time. They've been calling front-line workers, First Nations leaders, Métis leaders. Those that work in the front lines are saying, enough's enough, from the schools everywhere saying, mental health, suicide is a crisis.

This government, to look at some of the high rates, you know, you think about it . . . And I think about Jim Sinclair, you know, and some of his comments. And he said, you know, we built the jails and then the day after we built them, we found ourselves in one. They were fighting to build those jails, and the day after we were in them. That is a shame. That's nothing to be proud of. That's nothing to be proud of.

So I think the government has to and needs to work more with First Nations and Métis, and a commitment to saying . . . And here's an opportunity. If the federal government — Conservatives, Liberals, NDP — those members can come together and pass and support a unanimous motion, why can't we do that here, if the government really wanted to?

And there are so many issues that are facing our children. You know, we look at the rates of poverty amongst First Nations and Métis. It's unbelievable. It's unreal. The struggles of addictions and incarceration. You know, we're 27 per cent of the population as a province, but why are our jails full of Aboriginal people? Because there's so much that needs to be done that a government can do to assist and work with.

I'm hoping, Mr. Speaker, I truly am hoping that this government will work, and maybe the Premier, his cabinet, and the ministers, and us on Monday could come together. If the government wants to, if the government has the will, they can do this. I know they can. We've done it before where they've passed and we've worked together to pass legislation because of the seriousness of it.

This is a serious issue. The young people are asking you as a

government. The leaders are asking you as a government. Front-line workers are asking you as a government. Please, we are asking you; I am asking you on behalf of the families that I have held and hugged and watched them crying because they've lost their young one.

[12:30]

I'm asking you as a government: please support this. Let's do this together unanimously. Let's pass legislation that will have a strategy to prevent suicides, the death of so many people, young people in this province. We can do that if you want to as a government. We can. We are ready to do that on this side of the House. I hope as a government you are prepared to do this as well, and we can work together and show the residents of our province that governments, whether we're opposite government, can come together for our children. For the most vulnerable, we can come together. I truly hope Monday we'll hear some good news that you're prepared to do that, and I will wait for that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I've got so much more I wanted to say, and you know, it's just the amount of hurt and pain that families are going through, and communities. And I watch workers who are trying their best, and I give them credit, the mental health workers who are trying. I watch the training that people are taking to reach out to young people. I watch the leadership doing the great work they do back home. All over the province, whether it's mayors, whether it's First Nations and Métis leaders, whether it's mosôm, you know, grandparents, aunts, uncles — everybody's trying to reach out to these young people to say, please don't lose hope.

But what does it say when you look at the education system? We've failed First Nations and Métis people. This province, we have. We could do so much more if we're willing to work together. There's so much more we could do, and meaningful, you know, not . . . Just like I've said, you know, it's not just for the photo ops, Mr. Speaker. It can't be just for the photo ops that are there for them to say, this is what we want and we'll take the picture, and off they go. And I've seen that.

And I'm not here to play politics. I've said it before. I hope meaningful . . . We can come together to find and support the bill that I've introduced, that this government will say yes. The cabinet, the members, the Premier will say, it's the right thing to do for these young people. It's the right thing to do for our province. Let's take care of all of our province, not just some areas of it. And let's end, once and for all, when we see a crisis, let's end racism and work together in a meaningful way. We can do that. I know that, and that's what our young people are asking. And I think if our young people were here telling us this, whether they're non-Aboriginal or Aboriginal, would say, work together as a government, as a province, to help this.

So, Mr. Speaker, I've gone on a little bit longer than I wanted to. I know we have time. But at this point, I'm prepared to move a motion. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 613, *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2018*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Cumberland has moved that Bill No. 613 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my honour to rise and join with the member from Cumberland to add into this debate. I really can't say anything more that the member hasn't said more eloquently than I could myself, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a very important issue and not just for the member from Cumberland, but for the entire province. Our colleague has been to way too many funerals in his time and more than I can even imagine. And so many of them are because of the loss of life of youth in his community, many of whom are way too young to have had to lose their lives due to suicide, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is why this bill is so important and why this issue is so important.

As mentioned by my colleague, parliamentarians federally just as of Wednesday evening voted unanimously in favour of a national suicide prevention action plan. All colleagues in that building from all sides of their floor worked together and voted in favour of this strategy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a real opportunity provincially for us to do the same, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I echo my colleague's comments and urge members opposite to consider doing the same, to show unity and show the importance of this issue for our province by working together on a non-partisan basis like we just saw federally and pass my colleague's private member's bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have a few days left and the opportunity is definitely still there.

At this point I am prepared to adjourn debate on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Douglas Park has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 613, *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2018*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

The Deputy Speaker: — The Government Deputy 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 12:36.]

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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Premier
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Tina Beaudry-Mellor
Minister of Advanced Education
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Minister Responsible for Innovation

Hon. Lori Carr
Minister of Highways and Infrastructure

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Central Services
Minister Responsible for the Provincial
Capital Commission
Minister Responsible for Public Service Commission

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Water
Security Agency
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation

Hon. Bronwyn Eyre
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation

Hon. Joe Hargrave
Minister of Crown Investments
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company

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Minister of Trade and Export Development
Minister of Immigration and Career Training

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and Northern Affairs

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor
and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan

Hon. David Marit
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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Crop
Insurance Corporation

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Hon. Don Morgan
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan
Workers' Compensation Board
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Telecommunications

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Minister Responsible for Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Jim Reiter
Minister of Health

Hon. Christine Tell
Minister of Corrections and Policing
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

Hon. Gordon Wyant
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Minister of Education
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