



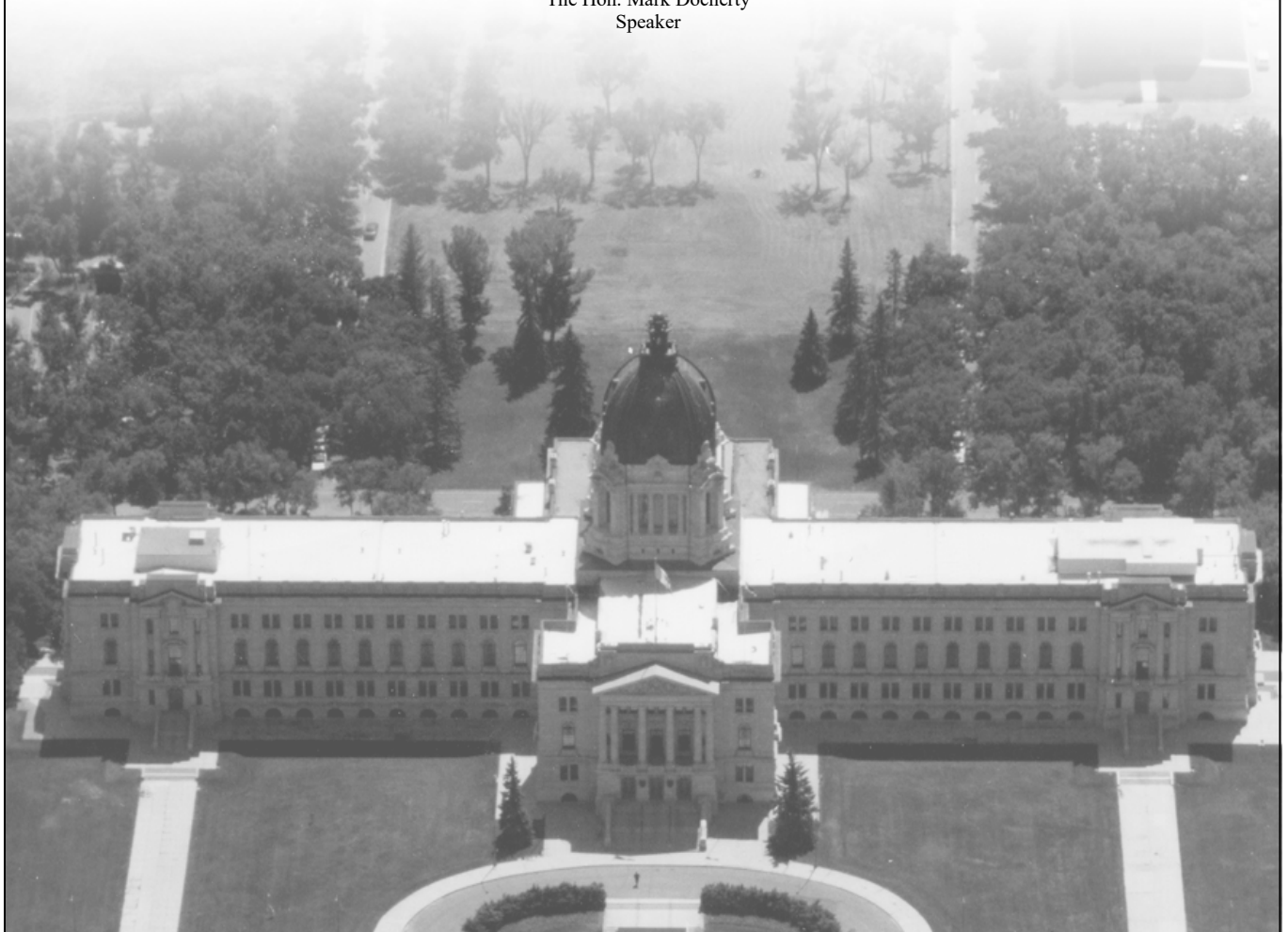
FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

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
4th Session — 28th Legislature

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

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Lambert , Lisa — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)	Vacant — Regina Walsh Acres
Lawrence , Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)	Vacant — Saskatoon Eastview

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 46; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 13; Vacant — 2

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Gregory A. Putz

Law Clerk & Parliamentary Counsel — Kenneth S. Ring, Q.C.

Principal Clerk — Iris Lang

Clerk Assistant — Kathy Buriannyk

Sergeant-at-Arms — Terry Quinn

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the west gallery, I have a couple of people I'd like to introduce. Mr. Speaker, about 30 years ago there's a lady up there that kind of stole my heart and, well, since then we've been married for 24 years. Just the other day was our anniversary. My wife, Fran, and I'd really like everybody to say hi to my wife, Fran.

And, you know, about two and a half years ago, Mr. Speaker, another young girl come into my life and stole my heart again. I just can't believe it, stole my heart again. And she's up in the gallery. That's her right there, and that's my granddaughter Madilyn. And, Mr. Speaker, she is a sweetheart. She's just like her mother and grandmother, I'm telling you. And so her and Grandpa, she is Grandpa's best friend and she loves to be here, wanted to come here today to see Grandpa. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like everyone in the House to welcome my wife and my granddaughter to this House.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

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

I do like to read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Regina. I do so present.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present a petition today calling on the Sask Party government to implement or put in place a seniors' advocate. The petitioners point out that for too long, the concerns of Saskatchewan's seniors have not been a priority of this government; that many Sask Party cuts directly impact Saskatchewan seniors; and instead of making life more affordable, they've slashed the hearing aid plan, cut the seniors' drug plan, eliminated a provincial support for seniors living with disabilities, hiked rents in long-term care and are desperately selling off public seniors'

housing, and got rid of STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company], which has a huge impact for seniors.

The petitioners point out that Saskatchewan does not have legislated minimum care standards for long-term care, and even with continued reports and concerns from families on the issues in long-term care, the Sask Party has failed to ensure safety, quality of life, and dignity for seniors. And they defeated a private member's bill twice, Mr. Speaker, on this issue.

And the petitioners also point out that several other provinces have seniors' advocates who successfully work to ensure seniors have the supports they need and deserve, and that a seniors' advocate would provide vital support for seniors and their families across the province.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to immediately appoint a seniors' advocate to ensure the rights of seniors are upheld and that all seniors across the province have the supports they need and deserve.

Mr. Speaker, this petition today is signed by citizens of Saskatoon. I do so present.

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 for a new long-term care facility in La Ronge and area. And according to the Croft report of 2009, it shows the area is in 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 the Sask Party government treat northern Saskatchewan senior citizens with respect and dignity and immediately invest in a new long-term care facility in La Ronge.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is supported by many leaders and signed by many residents of northern Saskatchewan. I so present.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling on the government to restore public control over Wascana Park. Mr. Speaker, Wascana Park is a treasured urban park and conservation area that has been effectively and efficiently managed through an equal partnership between the city of Regina, the province of Saskatchewan, and the University of Regina for over 50 years.

In 2017, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party sought to throw that equal partnership in the trash by passing legislation which gave them

majority control over the Provincial Capital Commission, which now oversees Wascana Park. As a result of that, we are seeing a growing commercialization of the park, as well as a sell-off of a portion of the park to the Sask Party's largest corporate donor.

Also notably absent from this conversation are the Sask Party Regina MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] who have yet to speak out in support of preserving Wascana Park, which thousands in Regina and across the province are quite concerned about, the growing commercialization of.

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 government to restore the governance structure of the Wascana Centre Authority and end the commercialization of Wascana Park.

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

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

Mr. McCall: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition calling for a reinstatement of the PST [provincial sales tax] exemption on construction. The undersigned residents of Saskatchewan wish to bring to your attention the following, Mr. Speaker: the Sask Party government has already hiked the PST to 6 per cent and applied it to everything from restaurant meals and children's clothes to insurance premiums. They point out that the Saskatchewan Party government removed the PST exemption for construction contracts and their decision is dramatically impacting Saskatchewan's construction industry.

They point out that many small and medium-sized businesses have already been hurt by the Sask Party tax hikes and will be forced to pass these rising costs along to their customers. And, Mr. Speaker, they point out that Saskatchewan families have been burdened by a decade of Sask Party utility rate hikes and tax increases and can't afford another Sask Party government tax, which is by its very definition a job-killing tax, Mr. Speaker.

So in the prayer that reads as follows, the petitioners:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to stop saddling families and businesses with the costs of their mismanagement and immediately reinstate the PST exemption on construction and stop hurting Saskatchewan businesses and families.

Mr. Speaker, this particular petition is signed by citizens from Weyburn and Regina. I so present.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present yet again another petition to this Legislative Assembly calling for a \$15 minimum wage.

And the undersigned residents of this province want to bring to

our attention the following: that Saskatchewan now has the lowest minimum wage in Canada; and that a minimum wage should never be a poverty wage, but we know Saskatchewan people who are working full time at minimum wage jobs are in fact living in poverty; and that a \$15-an-hour wage will improve health and well-being and lift Saskatchewan workers out of poverty. And we know that a \$15 wage will benefit local businesses and support local economies by putting money in workers' pockets to spend in their own communities.

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 adopt a plan to raise the minimum wage here in Saskatchewan to \$15 an hour for all workers.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition come from the city of Moose Jaw. I do so present. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in my place today to present a petition asking the Sask Party government to respect the North. The northerners work hard as trappers, fishers, and hunters to be responsible stewards of the land. That northerners feel disrespected by the current Sask Party government and do not feel as though they are being treated fairly; that northerners want to see resources in fishing, forestry, and mining developed responsibly in full partnership with northern communities; that northerners are facing many challenges which have only been made worse by layoffs in the mining sector, the closure of the Buffalo Narrows Correctional Centre, and the sell-off of STC.

So the prayer reads as follows:

Calls on the Saskatchewan Party government to stop disrespecting the North and begin immediate dialogue with northern communities to work towards an agreement for responsible, inclusive resource management.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this particular page are from Dillon and Ile-a-la-Crosse, and I so present.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present a petition calling on the Sask Party government to fix the crisis in our classrooms.

Mr. Speaker, many people have signed this petition from all over the province, and they want to bring our attention to a number of points: that the Sask Party government's cuts mean falling per-student funding and fewer supports for students who need a little extra help — we know that the per-student reduction is \$400 below the level of two years ago and up to as much as \$800 per student when factors like inflation and growth are factored in; that the Sask Party government's cuts leave educators without the resources that they need to support student learning, Mr. Speaker, and this is a message that has been made loud and clear and repeatedly, and yet that government continues to refuse to hear it; that the Sask Party government is ignoring overcrowding

in our classrooms by refusing to track and report on classroom sizes; and that the Sask Party government's lack of funding for school infrastructure has led to crumbling and overcrowded schools right across Saskatchewan — we know that the infrastructure deficit is now pegged at well over a billion dollars and growing every day; and that the Sask Party government's failure to invest in our classrooms is having serious consequences today and will continue to into the future until this government gets serious about actually addressing these issues.

I'll read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call upon the Sask Party government to immediately fix the crisis in our classrooms by properly funding the most important investment we can make, and that is in the education of our children.

Mr. Speaker, those who have signed the petition today reside in the Battlefords and in Cut Knife. I do so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, I'm rising today to present a petition calling for a moratorium on logging in the Nesslin Lake area. The people who have signed this petition would like to bring to our attention the following: Nesslin Lake, Ness Lake, and Zig Zag Bay campgrounds bring thousands of tourists to the area annually. It is also the prime recreational area for the residents of Big River and the surrounding area. The Ness Creek site alone brings thousands of tourists to the area through its numerous events and activities, resulting in an additional 25,000 visitor days annually.

Portions of the forest in the Nesslin Lake area are slated for logging as early as September 2020, which will negatively impact tourism, traditional and recreational use, and its untapped economic potential. Mr. Speaker, a moratorium on logging in this area is critical, as if this logging proceeds, it will cause irreparable harm to the economic potential of the area for decades. Local area residents and businesses need more time to ensure a more sustainable economic plan is put in place. Mr. Speaker, I would invite the ministers responsible for Parks and Economy and the Environment to come up and visit this area and get a sense of the real impact that this logging will have on the area.

I will read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

We, the undersigned, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to place a moratorium on all proposed logging in the area between Nesslin Lake and the Ness Creek site, as well as immediately north of Nesslin Lake.

And, Mr. Speaker, the folks who are signing this petition today are from the communities of Big River and Saskatoon. I so submit.

[10:15]

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

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition calling for real action to fight climate change. Mr. Speaker, with the events of yesterday and the day before and the weeks before, I can't help but drawing parallels between COVID-19 and climate change. COVID-19 demonstrates the real risk of delaying too long and having a disaster like that overwhelm the infrastructure and cause disaster to the measures that we have in place and our systems that we have in place, Mr. Speaker. And that is unfortunately the situation with climate change. The scientists have been telling us for a long time that if we acted proactively and dealt with this, the impacts would be far less.

So, Mr. Speaker, in this petition the residents of Saskatchewan want to bring to our attention that Saskatchewan produces the highest greenhouse gas emissions per capita in all of Canada. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners wish to bring to our attention that the Saskatchewan Party government has failed to tackle climate change, reduce emissions to the province's own targets, or put in place a real plan to protect the environment.

Mr. Speaker, in the prayer:

The petitioners respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan enact a real plan and allocate appropriate funding in this coming 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.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners signing this petition are residents of Regina. Mr. Speaker, I humbly present.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand in my place today to present a petition calling for the restoration of the rental housing supplement. The individuals that signed this petition want to draw the following points to your attention: the rental housing supplement helps people living with disabilities and low-income families pay their rent; the Sask Party's elimination of the rental housing supplement hurts low-income families and people with disabilities; those who currently receive the supplement have no assurance that a change of circumstance won't lead them to lose their supplement.

This cut comes after previous Sask Party cuts to the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program that have already affected hundreds and left people living with disabilities with fewer supports. Rents remain unaffordably high for many. Since the cost of living has increased significantly in the last decade while social services benefits have remained unchanged and in some cases have actually been reduced, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, 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 restore the Saskatchewan rental housing supplement.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition come from the city of Saskatoon. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Congratulations to Saskatoon Centenarians

Ms. Lambert: — Today I would like to recognize Martha Tapanila and Wilna Haugen, two centenarians in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, Martha Perala was born on a farm south of Dinsmore in 1915. Her family moved to the United States during her early years but eventually settled back in the Dinsmore area where her father began farming. In 1937 wedding bells rang as Martha married Arvid Tapanila, a young country-school teacher. Their family grew quickly as Martha and Arvid welcomed six children, four girls and two boys.

Mr. Speaker, Martha has an infectious laugh and loves a good joke. At the age of 104, she is still living life to the fullest, reading, doing puzzles daily, writing letters, and keeping physically active.

Wilna Haugen celebrated her 100th birthday this past June where over 154 immediate family members travelled from coast to coast and several states to be with her on her big day.

Mr. Speaker, Wilna Royce and her two sisters were raised on a small farm outside of Prince Albert. In 1938 she married Carl Haugen and the two raised eight children together.

Mr. Speaker, Wilna still blesses her family with exceptional banana bread and to-die-for strawberry rhubarb pie. Wilna loves to spend time with her 28 grandchildren, 70 great-grandchildren, and 22 great great-grandchildren. She went on an Alaskan cruise for her 99th birthday.

Please join me in congratulating Martha Tapanila and Wilna Haugen on reaching their centenarian birthdays. Thank you.

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

Concerns of Prince Albert Residents

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party is letting the people of Prince Albert down, but New Democrats will put people first.

The people of Prince Albert remember back when Sask Party candidates used to go door to door saying, a vote for the Sask Party is a vote for the mill. Now — when families are more stressed and stretched than ever before with the lowest minimum wage in the country, living paycheque to paycheque — that broken promise rings hollow.

People in Prince Albert remember Sask Party candidates who pretended to listen and pretended to care about the need for a second bridge. Now they shake their heads while they wait far

too long in backed-up traffic and watch dangerous goods roll through the heart of our community, all because this is a government that just doesn't care.

People in Prince Albert remember how the Premier promised a new hospital for Prince Albert and how he came to town last Friday to announce a renovation that won't even start for years, and has no guarantees for creating a single job for a single Saskatchewan worker.

And then there are the cuts — cuts to EAs [educational assistant] in our schools, cuts to mobile crisis, and the senseless decision to cut and cancel STC, the vital service for people.

This fall, the people of Prince Albert are ready to send not one, but two New Democrats back to this legislature to put people first.

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

Salvation Army Kettle Campaign Supports Swift Current Community

Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Salvation Army Christmas Kettle Campaign is a memorable part of the Christmas season, especially for the community of Swift Current. Each year the Salvation Army sets up donation kettles in businesses across the city, and citizens of Swift Current and southwest Saskatchewan donate generously.

Mr. Speaker, the kettle campaign in Swift Current raised \$220,000 for the Salvation Army this past season and is their biggest annual fundraiser. I was honoured to be able to speak at the campaign kickoff on November 23rd, along with new Salvation Army captains, Ed and Charlotte Dean.

Mr. Speaker, money for the kettle campaign stays locally and allows the Salvation Army to provide programs all year, like the Monday night meal program and the food bank. Along with my wife, Anita, I was pleased to be part of the meal-serving team on February 3rd, and we're looking forward to being able to help out again in the weeks ahead.

Mr. Speaker, the Swift Current Salvation Army is a pillar of our community. Local food drives collect thousands of pounds of food for the Salvation Army's Food Bank. Local Hutterite colonies also donate food by the truckload. Of course, organizations like the Salvation Army would not be possible without the dedication of volunteers who serve during the Christmas kettle campaign and throughout the entire year. Mr. Speaker, I now invite all members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating the Salvation Army on another successful kettle campaign, and to thank them for the work they put in to serving our community and the entire Southwest. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Services Marks 40th Anniversary

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to

recognize Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Services' 40th anniversary this year. SCIS [Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Services] is a non-profit organization that provides 24-hour crisis services and case management for vulnerable citizens, and a Housing First program for people without shelter who want a safe place to call home.

Mr. Speaker, the services provided by Mobile Crisis in Saskatoon are invaluable. Professionals respond by phone or immediate mobile presence when a caller experiences distress. Concerns may include the care and welfare of children, a mental health or addictions crisis, a suicide threat, or a senior's deteriorating health. Last year Mobile Crisis responded to more than 28,000 calls.

SCIS's crisis management services connect individuals living with chronic illness to services that stabilize their income, housing, and health, helping them avoid hospital emergency departments, police, and the courts. Saskatoon's police and crisis team is a partnership between Saskatoon police services, SCIS, the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority], and Saskatoon Mental Health and Addiction Services. Police and a social worker co-respond to people in crises for better outcomes. Last year PACT [police and crisis team] served more than 1,500 emergency calls in Saskatoon. Finally, SCIS's Journey Home Housing First is a partnership with the United Way of Saskatoon and Area and Saskatoon's Housing Initiatives Partnership to help people escape homelessness.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating SCIS on 40 years of providing invaluable services to the people of Saskatoon, and I encourage us all to continue supporting this organization that provides such essential services for an ever-growing need.

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

Partnership Initiative Provides New Homes for Six Saskatchewan Families

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 28th the Minister of Social Services officially welcomed six families with varying disabilities to new homes that will enable them to live in safety and comfort in houses that meet their unique needs. Last June we were breaking ground for these homes. Now we are celebrating their completion as well as another partnership success story.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend Camponi Housing for taking the lead on this initiative. Camponi Housing and its sister corporation, Sasknative Rentals, have provided rental housing in Saskatoon since 1980. Mr. Speaker, our government strongly believes in helping Saskatchewan people build independence by providing them with more choices in where and what they call home. Since November 2007, 359 affordable rental units have been completed in Saskatoon for people with disabilities, mental illness, and other barriers. These projects uphold the goals of our government's housing strategy, poverty reduction strategy, mental health and addictions action plan, and disability strategy.

Mr. Speaker, these projects increase housing supply, improve housing affordability, and support the individuals and families with the greatest housing need. To the families who will live in

these beautiful homes, I wish you success in your new surroundings and hope you will be very happy in your new home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Business Women of Moose Jaw Recognize Award Winners

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday night the Business Women of Moose Jaw celebrated the 7th annual PRISM [perseverance, role model, influential, successful, mentor] Awards with a sold-out crowd. The PRISM Awards celebrate the courage and accomplishment of women in business and leadership within the Moose Jaw community. The awards are held each year around International Women's Day, a national campaign that advocates equality and women supporting women.

Mr. Speaker, awards were given to an outstanding woman in seven different categories. The Perseverance Award went to Julie Knox. The Role Model Award went to Jackie Wilson. The Influence Award went to Roberta Fonger. The Success Award went to Marcy Duffey. The Mentor Award went to Jocelyn MacLeod. And the Youth Achievement Award went to Jaimie Lynn-Hodgson, and the Lifetime Achievement Award went to Joan Buckmaster.

Mr. Speaker, this year's awards guest speaker was 15 Wing's Chief Warrant Officer Marlene Shillingford, the first female member of the Canadian Forces Snowbirds. The evening raised over \$90,000 for the Moose Jaw Transition House, which does incredible work in my home city.

Mr. Speaker, I now invite all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating all award recipients and nominees and the success that they achieve every day. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Prince Albert Carlton.

Swinging with the Stars in Prince Albert Raises Funds for Hope's Home

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, Plaza 88 in Prince Albert was packed and filled with energy. Swinging with the Stars on Saturday night brought out seven pairs of dancers, all competing to raise money for a great cause — Hope's Home.

Mr. Speaker, there were two ways for participants to win. One was the People's Choice Award, which goes to the couple who raised the most money, and the Judges' Choice Award, based on the dancers' performance. Prince Albert local Todd Kulczycki and dance studio instructor Lauren Williams won the People's Choice Award after raising \$43,000, and the Judges' Choice Award went to Eric Schmalz, the RM [rural municipality] of Prince Albert reeve, and Bold Dance Productions co-founder Brooke Wozniak.

Mr. Speaker, we're still waiting to see the grand total of the fundraiser, but we know it's over \$100,000 and these funds will go a long ways in supporting Hope's Home. Hope's Home

provides care for children with complex medical needs in our community. They provide daycare services, early learning and development programming, respite services, supportive living, and transition care for when children leave the hospital. Mr. Speaker, Hope's Home is a wonderful organization in our community, and I'd like to thank the people of Prince Albert for contributing to this incredible cause. Thank you very much.

[10:30]

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Preparedness for COVID-19 Outbreak

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A snap spring election in the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic would have been a reckless and irresponsible thing to do. We've pointed that out for a few days here now and we're very pleased and grateful that that's been heard, and I want to thank the Premier for his decision today and his announcement today that there will no longer be a snap spring election.

But serious questions about how this government is ready for an outbreak and how well they're able to respond, to how well they're able to respond to the health and economic challenges facing our province, these questions remain, Mr. Speaker. We're calling on the government today to take this seriously, to take this seriously and appoint a special committee, a special committee of the legislature, with both sides of the House involved to provide clarity about our preparedness for COVID-19 and about how to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan, the people of this province, are able to have their needs addressed in this very challenging time.

It is our opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to work together to bring forth a valid response, a strong response, to the health and economic challenges. So my question today, Mr. Speaker, is: will the government appoint that special committee so that the legislature can work together and minimize the health and economic impact of this massive worldwide challenge and its repercussions in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we move forward in dealing with this pandemic, any committee appointments or necessary structures of course will be determined by the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition referenced that the members on this side of the House need to take this serious. We've been taking this very seriously all along. Mr. Speaker, we've had our officials working diligently, medical professionals working diligently to prepare for this. They continue to do so. We're extremely concerned, Mr. Speaker.

It's affected the entire world. You see events being cancelled all around us, including in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to work diligently. We have great faith in our medical professionals in the Ministry of Health and the SHA that they'll have us well prepared. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This side of the House stands ready to be constructive and contribute to the right response to this significant challenge at this time, Mr. Speaker. I said from the first moment I discussed this with the Health minister, this is not a time for partisanship. This is a time for us to focus on what really needs to happen.

Now that the threat of a spring election . . . Now that the planning for a spring election has finally stopped, Mr. Speaker, we can actually do that. We can remove the politics from this pandemic, which is exactly what we need to do. This is our moment to move forward. We have not seen this government put in enough attention yet. They've been planning for an election when they should be planning for a pandemic, Mr. Speaker. We haven't made it there yet.

But that was up until now, Mr. Speaker. That was up until now. And I say to the Minister of Health, that was yesterday; today is today. We are here and able to work together and work forward.

Let us work together for the best response for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Let's not table a budget that is divorced from the realities that we're facing in the province today. Let's postpone the budget. Let's convene this committee to work together on the economic and health impacts. Let's have a responsible, collective response to this challenge today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, let's understand exactly where the politics entered into this situation, Mr. Speaker. It was directly from the Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, just a few weeks ago when he reached out to me, appropriately so, and asked for a briefing with Dr. Shahab, I was happy to arrange it. As the member just said, we had a great discussion on how this needs to rise above politics. I offered to him . . . I said I would be happy to arrange any briefings you want with any officials you want. Contact me at any time and I'll be glad to do that.

Mr. Speaker, the next thing we know, him and the members of his caucus are raising in the House that we're not prepared, that there's no plan, Mr. Speaker. They're lighting their hair on fire, running around, trying to instill fear in the citizens of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, even though nothing could be further from the truth.

He talks today about today matters, not yesterday. It's funny he chose those words, Mr. Speaker, because yesterday, instead of doing what I asked so we could make this non-political — reaching out to me for briefings — instead he reaches directly to officials, tries to do an end run on me, Mr. Speaker, when I offered to arrange it. Mr. Speaker, that briefing will go ahead. I'll be happy to do any he wants. But, Mr. Speaker, he's the member that needs to take the politics out of this.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan had its first confirmed case of COVID-19 today. There are large gaps in our readiness to deal with this epidemic, Mr. Speaker. We are speaking to physicians every day. We are speaking to nurses

every day, speaking to front-line providers who've received no information in their clinics, Mr. Speaker, about how to respond. There are big gaps. That's the reality. Why would we, why would we not make that clear?

That reality is here today, but let's address it. Let's work together. We can get ahead of this. We can flatten the curve. Let's stop the noise and actually work together. Is the Deputy Premier willing to work with our side on an economic and health plan to address this problem?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Unbelievable, Mr. Speaker. In the exact same sentence that he's talking about we need to take the politics out of it and work together, he's trying to install fear, Mr. Speaker. He's saying we have huge gaps in the system.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday Dr. Shahab had a press conference in which he was reassuring that we're taking all appropriate measures to be prepared. Mr. Speaker, he's finding front-line workers to say, well they're not prepared, Mr. Speaker. The president of SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses], Tracy Zambory, said, "We're not scared of COVID-19. We look after sick, contagious people every day. That's what registered nurses do. We're the first ones in there." Mr. Speaker, the story went on to say Zambory said she's reminded her 10,000 members to make sure they have fitted personal protective gear, which is typically worn during any kind of outbreak.

Mr. Speaker, he's a member that's trying to instill fear. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take my advice from medical professionals. He may be a doctor, but he's a full-time politician now. I'm going to listen to Dr. Shahab and the medical professionals in the SHA and the Ministry of Health.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sitting here receiving texts from colleagues who are working in the emergency room talking about situations with suspected positive patients, and questions about whether they were able to do treatment and containment properly. There are serious concerns on the front line. There are serious gaps in the plan.

An outline of a plan was released yesterday. This is the reality. The minister might not want to admit that there are gaps, but that is irresponsible. The discussion that needs to happen is, how do we close those gaps? We're willing to have that discussion, acknowledge that we're not where we need to be yet, and let's get where we need to get together. Will the Minister of Health stop the blame and work together to address the gaps?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, this is going to put a strain on the medical system, obviously. It is in any jurisdictions that have dealt with this, Mr. Speaker. We have medical professionals working diligently to prepare for that. The appropriate response, what we should be doing is what the member opposite suggested several weeks ago to me — that we shouldn't be fearmongering; that we should be working together to calm people.

Part of leadership, Mr. Speaker, if he wants to be in leadership, is to reassure people that we will prepare, and then take the steps to make sure that we are prepared, Mr. Speaker, not to get out ahead of something and find somebody that's willing to say something to worry people and inflame them, Mr. Speaker. Obviously this is going to test some capacity, Mr. Speaker. But what we need to do is be supportive of Dr. Shahab and the medical professionals that are preparing for this, not inflaming people and unnecessarily panicking people, Mr. Speaker. That's what true leadership's about.

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

Provincial Budget

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, until about an hour ago, a couple of hours ago, the folks on that side were planning a spring election. They were planning a political event during a pandemic, Mr. Speaker. To suggest that that was wise would be to go a very long way from reality. But a wise decision was made today, and I am very glad that the Premier made that choice. I'm so glad that he made that choice today. I'm proud of him for finally listening and making that choice and getting rid of that option.

But today we have a lot of work ahead of us. The people of this province are worried. They're already struggling. They're already struggling economically. They're already hurting, and now they're about to see a budget that is completely divorced from the economic reality today. Markets plunged further last night. Oil prices are still in the toilet, Mr. Speaker. Do we have any serious plan to revisit the budget and have a budget that's connected to the realities that people in Saskatchewan are facing today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite needs to pick a lane. He wants stability. He wants the people of Saskatchewan to have some answers, but he wants to delay the budget. Mr. Speaker, I said yesterday and I believe I said it the day before as well. We're not going to delay the budget. Revenues may change but our incentives and our stimulus within the budget is not going to change. The expenditures in the budget is not going to change. And the people of this province needs to know what this government is going to do to help stimulate the economy, and they need to hear that now more than ever. Mr. Speaker, the revenues may change — we understand that; this is a very unprecedented time — but our expenditures are not.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was at SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] this morning and spoke with a number of the delegates on the way out, and I was very pleased to hear from them a response that . . . Their response was this: they were really happy to hear language about working together, because they are worried. They're worried about what's happening with COVID-19. They know those cases are coming. They're worried about their own family members and their own health.

They're worried about our economy. What's happening in farming? What's happening in oil and gas? What's happening in

all of our key industries, and their ability to pay their own bills, their ability to put a crop in this spring? That's what's on their minds.

Who's doing the work? That's not what's on their mind right now. They want the work to get done. Will this government, will the Deputy Premier stand up and let me know? Is he willing to work together to actually tackle these economic health challenges together?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, we won't be taking economic advice from the NDP [New Democratic Party]. This is the party, quite frankly, that would have eliminated the measures that we took that will stabilize the budget and help us through this scary, challenging time, Mr. Speaker. They would make a billion-dollar deficit just doing that. This is a party that is saying we need to spend more in every way imaginable to another billion dollars' worth of promises, Mr. Speaker. That is a \$2 billion deficit that they would have in this very budget, Mr. Speaker. No, we will not take advice from the members opposite.

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

Negotiations With Teachers' Union

Ms. Beck: — The Deputy Premier wouldn't answer those questions. I hope he stands and finds his feet to answer these. Yesterday he, the Minister of Education, accused teachers of walking away from students, when they are the ones fighting for students. Then in front of over a hundred students from across the province who travelled here to show support for their teachers, he shouted, swore, and insulted teachers like a schoolyard bully. But this shouldn't have come as a surprise. This is exactly how this government responds every time the consequences of their choices catch up with them. They point fingers to distract from their failures when all that those students want are solutions.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if that Deputy Premier needs a cooling-off period. Because students need a minister who's committed to putting them and their education first, not one who poisons the well. Mr. Speaker, what's it going to be? Will he step up or step off?

[10:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I find that comment to be just remarkable, Mr. Speaker. It's the members opposite that are poisoning the well, Mr. Speaker, by instilling fear in the people of Saskatchewan around any one of a number of issues, Mr. Speaker.

The kids that were here yesterday, we heard them loud and clear. They want people back at the bargaining table. Mr. Speaker, the government has been waiting at the bargaining table for the union to return. We have an offer that we want to discuss with the union, Mr. Speaker, so that we can move forward not just on the compensation piece, Mr. Speaker, but on composition.

They well know our views, Mr. Speaker. Collective bargaining is to deal with the issues that are responsible, that are responsive to collective bargaining. We want to get back to the table. We're waiting there, Mr. Speaker. That's what the kids were here yesterday asking for. They need to talk to the union leadership who need to come back to the bargaining table. That's who they need to be talking to, because it wasn't the government that walked away.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, he continues to use intentionally inflammatory language time after time. It's night and day, Mr. Speaker, the difference between yesterday and the minister's rhetoric from the happy days when he was banking on the support of teachers to secure his bid for the leadership of that party. When he wanted teachers' votes he promised them the moon, and now that he can't deliver he's changing his tune.

He's failed to get his cabinet on board, not even maintaining per-student funding. He admitted yesterday that the best that he could do was a mere \$5 million drop in the bucket. He's pointing fingers at his own cabinet. He's calling those across the bargaining table from him names when he should be committed to putting students first. How, how, Mr. Speaker, can we expect that minister to secure a deal when he's poisoned the well so badly and he's shown us he simply is not up to the job?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — That response, Mr. Speaker, is the height of hypocrisy. When the member of Nutana can get up in her place and slander and discredit and insult respectable business people around this province with no consequence, I'm happy to lay the blame for the extracurricular activities, the removal of those, I'm happy to lay those right at the feet of the president of the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation], Mr. Speaker. And he was the one that made that decision, Mr. Speaker.

We had been at the bargaining table. We're happy to go back to the bargaining table, Mr. Speaker. There is a seat waiting for them, and we'd like to see them come back so that we can move forward on these very important issues, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed to making sure that we provide the best quality education to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, to those kids, Mr. Speaker. Our per-pupil funding is one of the largest in the country, Mr. Speaker. We're very proud of that, Mr. Speaker. Our commitment to operating, Mr. Speaker, and our commitment to capital is clear, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to make the decisions that we need to make that are in the best interests in the children in our classroom, Mr. Speaker, for the future of this province.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, there are 185,000 students across this province, and 100 of them were in here watching this Assembly yesterday. In an era when bullying and mental health are a daily struggle for students, that minister frankly should set a better example than the swearing and name-calling that they witnessed.

The minister and the Premier have spent the last few weeks blaming teachers and distracting from their own failures, failures

like cuts to per-student funding, a growing infrastructure deficit well over a billion dollars, and, Mr. Speaker, sending letters directly to teachers instead of presenting solutions to address the complexity and class pressures that are simply out of control. Talk about hypocrisy.

They've been too busy jockeying for a position in a spring election to get to work finding solutions to the crisis in our classrooms. What does the minister say to schools, to teachers, and to students who are looking for solutions — not politics — for leadership and not bullying?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — This is what I say to them, Mr. Speaker. What I say, Mr. Speaker, is that they need to come back to the bargaining table. Mr. Speaker, there is a seat waiting for them at the negotiating table, Mr. Speaker. There's seats waiting for them on the committee on class size and composition, Mr. Speaker. We're willing and able to sit down and have those conversations, Mr. Speaker, with a view of providing the best quality education to the children of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

So that's what we're willing to do. We simply ask — it's a very simple question, and it's what the students asked yesterday that were here — please get back to the bargaining table. That should be laid right at the feet of the union, Mr. Speaker, who refuse to come back to the table.

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

Global Transportation Hub Land Development

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For years the Sask Party has allowed us to examine the annual report for the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] at the Standing Committee for the Economy. Now months ago, Mr. Speaker, I wrote to the committee Chair to ask that a meeting be held so that we can look at the annual report and ask questions about the growing debt and mounting losses of public dollars at Bill Boyd's failed pipe dream, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Boy, the minister is kind of excited over there this morning, Mr. Speaker. My friend and colleague from Regina Northeast, the Deputy Chair of the committee, also wrote to his counterpart, the Chair. So far, Mr. Speaker, radio silence. Crickets.

Why can't the Sask Party get their act together and schedule this meeting so that we can get answers about the GTH? And what is the Sask Party trying to hide?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, there's processes in this Assembly to allow for budgets to be filed, budgets to be completed and, Mr. Speaker, there's also part of that process is to allow for officials to be called before a committee. Those things are done in an ordinary and a timely manner. And, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite might want to have things done out of turn and might want to have things brought forward at a different time or a different date, but we have an ordinary and a regular legislative calendar. It deals with committee processes. It deals with a variety of issues to get budgets finalized.

And, Mr. Speaker, that same process has the officials that are there. I've worked with the members opposite. I've worked with the committees. They've asked for certain officials to be brought there. I had officials there last year and, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to go on through that process. It's something that's important. It's part of the democratic process in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, because the members, on a whim, choose to do something out of time or at a different time, this is not something we are prepared to do. The members opposite want to talk about committees. They want to talk about processes. Mr. Speaker, we'll work in the ordinary manner.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, that's quite likely the worst response I've heard from that minister since I've been in this Assembly. When he wants to talk about ordinary . . . Ordinarily we get to have that committee at least two or three months after the annual report. Like, the annual report came out in July, Mr. Speaker. We've been asking since September. Every other instance, that minister has agreed to come to the committee and bring his officials. Now he's only got one, Mr. Speaker, for the GTH.

Now maybe we'll try this again, because there are questions we want to put to the minister and his official, and maybe the high-priced real estate company from Toronto, Mr. Speaker. We want to find out, how is it that the GTH budgeted for \$7.7 million in land sales and sold nothing? Why are the liabilities growing from 41 million to 45 million, Mr. Speaker? Why is the GTH's loan from RBC [Royal Bank of Canada] increasing from \$28 million to \$32 million? These are real questions, Mr. Speaker.

Why do they have a \$1.2 million contract with a landscaping company? And of course the big question: when the dust settles, how much is the GTH costing the taxpayers of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I hope that for the sake of this province that the members opposite never, ever are given the opportunity to form government. Because with the way they are approaching the GTH, we will never sell land ever again. It's cast a cloud over the project. Mr. Speaker, we're not blaming them for the decisions that were made at the GTH, but a little support, a little help, and a little credit for the good things that are taking place there — the nearly 1,000 people that go to work there every day, the completion of the roadway that's gone through, that's taken massive amounts of traffic off of Dewdney.

The member from Rosemont gets up every day in the House for the last two or three years, get the traffic off of Dewdney. Now that it's happened, oh well, I don't want it anymore. Mr. Speaker, what would the member opposite from Rosemont want us to do? Would he want us to close that roadway and move the traffic back downtown? Does the member opposite want us to close it up so we don't have those people going to work out there every day? Mr. Speaker, we move hundreds of trucks through there every month.

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

Health Care for Mental Health and Addictions

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, the opioid and meth crisis in Regina has reached a breaking point. In just over two months, the number of drug overdoses in Regina sits at 100 and climbing. Mr. Speaker, the total for all of last year — still a very high number and unacceptable — was 82. People are dying, and the government is not doing anything to ensure they get the help they need. We desperately need to invest in mental health and addictions services to help people in our communities who are struggling. When will this government finally admit that we face an addictions crisis in Regina and across this province? And what will it do to prevent further deaths?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, the member raises a very valid, very serious topic, Mr. Speaker. We do indeed have a mental health and addictions serious, serious problem in this province, Mr. Speaker. We've discussed it many times on the floor of the Assembly. I won't go through the long list of things that were initiated in last year's budget, Mr. Speaker.

I will say, specific to her question about the issue in Regina, you'll be seeing an announcement very soon on a rapid access to addictions medicine clinic in Regina, Mr. Speaker. We have a budget coming up very soon where once again you'll see mental health and addictions being a focal point of that budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Development of Small Modular Reactors in Saskatchewan

Mr. Olason: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and join in the debate this afternoon. And at the appropriate time I'll be making the following motion that:

Recognizing Saskatchewan uranium has facilitated low-emissions nuclear power around the globe for decades and contributes value-added benefits to the economy, this Assembly supports the development of small modular reactors as a pathway in combatting climate change.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I begin my remarks I do want to thank the Saskatchewan government caucus researchers who have provided us with a wealth of information on this topic, and we really couldn't do our jobs without them. And it's always nice to say thank you to them, especially in light of some of the comments that the member from Saskatoon Centre had said in the past.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity along with many of my colleagues in this place to attend the Legislative Energy Horizon Institute in 2018. It's a fantastic program and I was blessed to be able to go and participate in it. And as part of that program we study energy from the beginning, from how it's created, how it's distributed, how it's transmitted, and how it's consumed, Mr.

Speaker. It's fascinating work and it's a fascinating subject that I knew very little about. And they reminded me just how little we do know about it.

So as a background on energy, we had a fantastic facilitator, a fantastic instructor named Chip to start us off. And he has probably forgotten more about energy than you or I or anybody in this place could ever know. His knowledge is extensive and we spent four hours with him in the classroom. One of the remarkable things about Chip was that he had the ability to write on a whiteboard with both hands, different sentences or different equations, and I thought that that was remarkable in itself. But one of the things, you know, that Chip was very good at was making things easily understood by legislators and people who weren't involved in the energy industry at all, except through perhaps one or two chapters in university or high school.

You know, when we talk about energy and we talk about energy production, we have to have what they call baseline power. And so that is what enables you . . . When you wake up in the morning to turn on your light switch, your light comes on. Or your television and you can watch the news. That baseline power has to be there every single day, every single minute of every single day.

[11:00]

And what we in Saskatchewan rely on to provide that power right now is coal. It's cheap. It's economical. It provides a number of jobs in Saskatchewan. And that's what we count on to provide that baseline energy right now. Now the federal government has said that they're going to phase out coal, and you know, we're going to have to find a different way to provide that baseline power. But it's always important to remember that we have to have that baseline in order to power our homes and what we need in our homes.

And when we talk about renewables, we talk about hydro, we talk about solar, we talk about wind. Unfortunately solar and wind aren't able to, at this time, look after that baseline energy load, and so that's a challenge, Mr. Speaker. Until we can find an economical and innovative way to store power, which we can't right now, we're going to have to continue to rely on other sources for our baseline power. And Chip made that very, very clear. He provided an example of how policy decisions shape different things, shape different realities in different jurisdictions.

And in one of those jurisdictions, it was California. Now California is an interesting case study because they have made the policy decision to have 50 per cent of their energy provided by renewables, which in their case is solar and wind. And so at the beginning of the day they have a baseline consumption amount of power that everybody uses, and as the day goes on and people go to work — they work together in buildings — the consumption goes down quite dramatically actually. And then as they come home from work, obviously they cook their supper or watch TV or turn on their air conditioning. That power consumption rises drastically.

So at the beginning of the day they have their baseline consumption. And then people go to work, and at the same time, Mr. Speaker, the sun starts shining and the wind starts blowing and the renewables start producing energy. Without the ability to

store that energy, California needs somewhere to put it. It's being produced but it's not being consumed, and they are paying people to produce this power, this renewable energy.

And so what they do is they call Oregon, which relies a lot on hydro power, and Oregon has the ability to allow for fluctuations in their power usage so they can, for lack of a better term, turn down their power on their hydro. They call up Oregon and they say, hey Oregon, we've got a lot of power here that's an excess of power; can we sell it to you? And Oregon says, yes for sure, for sure you can sell it to us. We'll take all your power, and you can also pay us to take that power. And so California says, hey we don't want to waste this energy — we want to use it; it's renewable; it's clean energy — so yes, here's our power and here's some dollars to go along with it. And Oregon says, thank you very much, California.

And then later on in the afternoon about, you know, 4 or 5 o'clock, all of a sudden people started getting home from work, turning on their air conditioning and their TVs and their stoves to cook their supper. And California needs more power because it's, you know, 5, 6 o'clock. The sun's gone down. The wind stops blowing. They're not producing enough power to keep up with their consumption.

So they phone Oregon again and they say, hey Oregon, we need some more power here. Our people are home. They want to turn on their lights and make sure that everything works. Can we buy some power from you? And so Oregon says, yes sure. They turn up the dial on the hydro dams and produce more power and sell it back to California. And so California pays for the power that's produced in California through renewables, and then pays for Oregon to use it, and then later on in the day pays Oregon to send more power down to California. And, Mr. Speaker, that's the reality in California, and that's why they're having such issues around their policy.

Until we can find a way to store energy economically and use it when we need it, we're always going to have a need for that baseline power that coal provides in Saskatchewan right now. So that's just a little bit of primer on energy. It was a small part about what we learned at LEHI [Legislative Energy Horizon Institute] It was 10 days of pretty intense education but we got through it.

So now we look in Saskatchewan here. How are we going to replace the baseline power that right now coal provides? As the federal government moves towards phasing out coal and eliminating it entirely, we're going to have to find a way to have that baseline so that when you want to turn on your lights at home, you can turn on the light switch and it comes on.

We start talking about small modular reactors, and we actually touched on it a bit when we were down at LEHI, and some of the testing they're doing down at the university . . . I think it's University of Tennessee or Arkansas. They're doing some remarkable work down there as well.

And so I was happy to hear when our Premier joined with Ontario and New Brunswick to sign a memorandum of understanding to work on this technology. And you know, the first thought that crossed my mind was what a great opportunity for us here in Saskatchewan because, in my constituency of Saskatoon University, we have obviously the University of Saskatchewan,

and part of the University of Saskatchewan is the Sylvia Fedoruk Centre. They've been doing groundbreaking work since the '50s on nuclear technology, nuclear medicine. And I thought that's fantastic. We have the uranium and we have the brainpower to make this actually happen. So we're really talking about small modular reactors which are about 100 megawatts. They're a replacement for coal-fired plants, and they can fit easily into our grid.

So I was happy to see that the Sylvia Fedoruk Centre will be a partner in this, especially under their leadership with Dr. John Root. He's the executive director and he's also the president of the Canadian Nuclear Association, and that's good leadership at a pivotal moment. So we have world-class researchers and advanced nuclear research infrastructure, and the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] is uniquely positioned to be a national leader in the development of small modular reactor technology and nuclear innovation.

In fact, Dr. Root was interviewed a number of times after we signed the MOU [memorandum of understanding] with Ontario and New Brunswick. And he said a few things here and I'd like to quote him. He said, and I quote, "I think it's worth pursuing. Nuclear power is necessary if and when coal is phased out." And he also said, and I quote, "Renewable sources such as wind or solar do not produce emissions and should be part of the mix, but are not reliable as large scale 'base' sources of power." So that's Dr. John Root. He's doing great work at the university, and I can't thank him enough for the work that he's going to be doing as we move forward down this path.

Minister Seamus O'Regan of the federal government addressed the Canadian Nuclear Association just this last February. And in talking about Dr. Root and in talking about the work that they're doing at the U of S, they talk about tackling a changing climate where nuclear power is poised to provide the next wave of clean, affordable, safe, and reliable power. And none other than Bill Gates put it very succinctly: "Nuclear is ideal for dealing with climate change."

So we have the University of Saskatchewan doing some really good work on small modular reactors and I can't thank them enough, but they're joined also by the University of Regina as well as Sask Polytech in forming partnerships in order to move the technology forward and making sure that we are at the forefront of this.

And so why is Saskatchewan the ideal place to have this discussion? And I think, you know, it's incumbent upon us. We have the world's best uranium here in Saskatchewan. We've got a few companies that produce and mine it, and they've actually taken a hit here in the last few years. We provide 13 per cent of the world's primary uranium. We've been doing it since 1953. And you know, it's a long-term and stable source of uranium. And I didn't know this, Mr. Speaker, but about 1 in 10 homes in Canada and 1 in 20 in the United States, and millions more in other countries, receive electricity produced right from our Saskatchewan uranium.

And now, you know, they've been facing some headwinds in the last couple of years and we understand that as a government, and we hope to help them through this downturn. After Cameco had to close McArthur River, Key Lake operations, that cost a

number of jobs. This doesn't seem like it's going to change or turn around here any time soon. And so we as a government would like to help our uranium industry as much as we can, and small modular reactors seem to be the way to do that.

So you know, Mr. Speaker, I see that my time is coming up. But if we look at the Saskatchewan plan for growth, we have 20 actions for 2020. And a couple of those are delivering on Saskatchewan's climate change plan to reduce carbon emissions, and reducing carbon emissions in electricity production, and advancing the development of zero-emission small modular reactor technology using Saskatchewan uranium. We want to increase the annual value of uranium sales to 2 billion, and advance development of zero-emission small modular reactor technology. And we're going to work towards those goals most definitely, Mr. Speaker.

So I think as we talk about SMRs [small and medium-sized reactors], we have to keep in mind three important points: the federal government is shutting down coal; we have the uranium — we can mill it here and we can produce the technology to enable SMRs to come online; and SMRs have near zero emissions so it will also help with our climate change strategy. SMRs are the answer.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move the following motion:

Recognizing that Saskatchewan uranium has facilitated low-emissions nuclear power around the globe for decades and contributes value-added benefits to the economy, this Assembly supports the development of small modular reactors as a pathway in combatting climate change.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It's been moved by the member for Saskatoon University that:

Recognizing that Saskatchewan uranium has facilitated low-emissions nuclear power around the globe for decades and contributes value-added benefits to the economy, this Assembly supports the development of small modular reactors as a pathway in combatting climate change.

The Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to join the debate as it pertains to the uranium industry in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And I think it's really, really important to point out that from the perspective of the opposition, there is no question in our minds, in our hearts, that we want to see the provincial economy grow. And we also want to look at ways and means to generate energy with the goal of reducing emissions. We've been speaking about that for years and years and years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's one of the reasons why 12 years ago we handed the Sask Party government a booming economy, a growing population, billions in the bank, Mr. Speaker. Because why? Because the NDP wanted to see the provincial economy grow. Now it's really important, Mr. Speaker, that as you fast forward to this date — and that's what's really important; I want

to preface my comments to the people of Saskatchewan — to where we are today, after inheriting billions of dollars in the bank, a low, low debt, Mr. Speaker, a growing population, an economy that was firing on all cylinders, where are we today after 12 years of Saskatchewan Party rule?

We are seeing that one in four Saskatchewan children are living in poverty — one in four, Mr. Speaker. Families are paying an extra \$800 in PST since this government's billion-dollar tax grab in 2017. Since this government took office, Mr. Speaker, home foreclosures have increased by nearly 400 per cent. The proportion of mortgages in arrears has tripled, Mr. Speaker. And since this Sask Party government has taken office, Mr. Speaker, 10,000 more Saskatchewan households are receiving income assistance, Mr. Speaker.

That is the Saskatchewan that the Saskatchewan Party built, and that is a Saskatchewan the people of the whole province does not want. So once again, Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate that the opposition, the current NDP opposition, the current caucus of the NDP, are in full support of every development in the province of Saskatchewan because, as we have proven in the past, we have to see our provincial economy grow.

[11:15]

And I dare say . . . and I challenge every member of the Sask Party caucus opposite, Mr. Speaker. Every time that the economy was doing very well in the history of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, it was an NDP government in charge, Mr. Speaker. We all know that the history, it shows it time and time again. And I point out again, that's one of the reasons why, Mr. Speaker, that the Sask Party has been able to enjoy their last 12 years in power is because they simply inherited all the great news, all the great revenues in the budget, and of course the booming economy that was built by the people of Saskatchewan in partnership with the NDP.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll point out again, every time in the history of Saskatchewan that the economy is going good, Mr. Speaker, an NDP government alongside the people of Saskatchewan were certainly in charge.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we're going to hear a lot more on the alternatives that we speak about in the Assembly as it pertains to uranium development and the green economy. My colleagues, whom you'll hear from later on in this debate, will certainly provide a lot of insight.

But from the perspective of northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that when the age of the uranium mines came into being, Mr. Speaker, I was a young man in northern Saskatchewan. And it was the NDP that bought into uranium development and provided the mining and milling operations and the whole introduction of the uranium industry to the province. It was the NDP in charge, Mr. Speaker. It was not the Conservatives, nor it was the Sask Party, but it was the NDP.

And as we saw the uranium development happen, Mr. Speaker, we saw the uranium development happen, we saw investment into the North. We saw some great opportunities around training, Mr. Speaker. We saw the creation of infrastructure. I remember our road being paved. At that time, the NDP MLA was the hon.

Fred Thompson, and Fred Thompson as an NDP MLA ushered in a lot of development and opportunity, Mr. Speaker, attached to uranium development. He was one of the champions, I dare say, within the caucus that said that uranium development is important for the North. And we saw all that development occur, Mr. Speaker.

Now we fast forward to the comments today about uranium development, Mr. Speaker. We have long advocated, people in the North, in support of some of the early work done by Mr. Thompson and the NDP, that we want to see responsible and inclusive development of all northern resources, Mr. Speaker. What is wrong with that picture? Nothing wrong with that picture because when we say inclusive, Mr. Speaker, we mean engaging the Indigenous people, Mr. Speaker.

We saw the creation of the Department of Northern Saskatchewan alongside of the development of the uranium industry. We saw huge investment in northern Saskatchewan. And what do we see now? To the people of Saskatchewan, what do we see now in northern Saskatchewan? We are now leading the country in the indicators of how many struggles people are having in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. The struggles are huge.

And I would point out to the Saskatchewan Party government that they talk about uranium development in this particular motion. I want to point out about the \$10 million afforded to the coal sector that was impacted very adversely by decisions around coal and its impact to greenhouse gas emissions, Mr. Speaker. This government came along and they put \$10 million — \$10 million — into that area to help the families and the workers being impacted by the decision to reduce our dependency on coal, Mr. Speaker. This government put \$10 million into the area to help the transition strategy.

And I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that there are a great number of families impacted, and from the NDP perspective we feel that those impacts have to be mitigated, that the transition has to happen. So we supported that effort, that \$10 million contribution to the region, because it's important to keep families working. We understand that, Mr. Speaker, and we support and respect that.

What happened, Mr. Speaker, is when the uranium industry took a downturn in northern Saskatchewan, overnight almost 900 people — 900 people — were put out of work, Mr. Speaker. Nine hundred people in this province were put out of work because of the closure that member spoke about in his opening address that impacted the northern mining operations in Saskatchewan. A lot of families in my home community and many communities throughout the province were impacted. There's 900 people that lost their jobs, Mr. Speaker, overnight.

And what did this government do to help with the transition to those families, to the region that really lost a huge part of their economy, the biggest part of their economy, Mr. Speaker? Not one red cent, Mr. Speaker. Not one red cent to that industry and in particular to the people that were impacted by the loss of their jobs. Mr. Speaker, I have seen with my own time and eyes, Mr. Speaker, the fact that families were adversely affected.

We saw the decimation of the family income. And then when that

income begins to slide down, Mr. Speaker, the pressures on the parents, many times the pressures result in separation, divorce, addictions, you name the list. That's what begins to happen to some of these families and we see that impact in the North. And then you turn around and you have no investment by this government into alternative economies in the North. And then you wonder why the people of the North are so angry.

So, Mr. Speaker, as you look at an issue like the closure of the Buffalo Narrows Correctional Centre putting 14 people out of work, the closure of the NORTEP [northern teacher education program] program making it harder to train teachers in the North . . . The list goes on as to how this government has hurt northern Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, people in the North are beginning to speak up, to organize, and to fight back.

So when we have examples of this sort coming along where they're trying to play their little game here and, Mr. Speaker, trying to look at division as it pertains to the uranium industry, on this side of the House we agree that responsible, inclusive development is so important while reducing greenhouse gases. And the uranium industry is a strong, vibrant industry in this province, and we will continue to support that industry, Mr. Speaker.

But we speak about fairness and being included in all of the development. Inclusiveness is really, really important to the people of northern Saskatchewan. So I point out to the Sask Party, it is a bit ironic, it is a bit ironic that they're putting this motion forward today, Mr. Speaker, because they have done nothing to support the uranium industry. They have no history in supporting them in the early years, Mr. Speaker, and they continue over-relying on the uranium industry for the economy of the North, Mr. Speaker. So the list goes on.

And finally I would ask, 10 million to a region where they're reducing coal use — we support that. And not one red cent to the northern people when it came down to the 900 jobs lost over the last year. So, Mr. Speaker, I think people in Saskatchewan ought to know that.

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

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand in my place in this great room to speak in favour of the government motion in support of small modular nuclear reactors as a future part of Saskatchewan's power generation mix, and as a way to produce emissions-free power, and to utilize existing power transmission infrastructure in the process.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Athabasca didn't say very much about small modular reactors. In fact he pretty much avoided the topic altogether, and I think we know why. He represents northern people, and his party is very much against nuclear power, so he's caught in a pretty tough spot.

Mr. Speaker, the member asked the question, what's happening in the North now? Here's what's happening, Mr. Speaker. In 2018 Saskatchewan accounted for 13 percent of the world's primary uranium production, all in northern Saskatchewan. The province has been producing uranium continuously since 1953 and is recognized as a long-term and stable source of uranium for the world. About 1 in 10 homes in Canada and 1 in 20 in the

United States and millions more in other countries receive electricity produced from Saskatchewan uranium that all comes from northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

In 2018 total employment by the uranium industry including contractors was over 2,000 people, Mr. Speaker, all northern or most of them northern people, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan's northern residents account for roughly half of those employed, which are mostly of Aboriginal ancestry.

Royalties were still over 27 million in 2018-19, which was a dramatic reduction from previous years due to low uranium pricing resulting in mine suspensions. But in 2018, \$146 million was still spent on uranium exploration, all in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. In 2019 an estimated \$163.5 million was spent on exploration for uranium, all in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

In 2017 the value of goods and services purchased by the uranium mining industry was \$515 million. Now approximately 51 per cent of that went to businesses in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

I know the member from Athabasca would be thrilled to hear what Saskatchewan's largest Crown corporation, SaskPower, has to say about small nuclear reactors, Mr. Speaker. SaskPower says:

SaskPower will continue to explore the potential of nuclear power from small modular reactors for power generation and support Saskatchewan's commitment to further development of the technology across Canada. SaskPower has been looking at the technical and economic feasibility of small modular reactors, SMRs. These are a new generation of nuclear reactors that are smaller and are factory built. SaskPower is working with Ontario Power Generation, Bruce Power, and New Brunswick Power to develop a proposal for \$625 million in federal funding to support SMR deployment in Ontario, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan's share of that funding will be about \$100 million, Mr. Speaker, they say, to support the development phase of SMR deployment in our province, and that would include site technology selection, development submission and approval of a licence to prepare a site, and development of a licence to . . . [inaudible] . . . from the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission.

I won't read the entire thing, but it's all very positive from SaskPower. But they go on to say, in December 2019 the premiers of Ontario, Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick signed a memorandum of understanding that includes a commitment to national meetings in 2020 to discuss strategies that will best advance the development and deployment of SMRs, prepare a feasibility report including a business case for the development and deployment of SMRs, and to develop a strategy plan for the deployment of SMRs.

The Premier has indicated that supporting SMR technology in the province will support the achievement of a zero emission power grid in Saskatchewan by 2050. And, Mr. Speaker, that is a lot more of a contribution to increasing the viability of uranium mining in northern Saskatchewan than was ever made by the

NDP.

Mr. Speaker, SaskPower goes on and on, but I think probably the member from Athabasca's had enough. I know he likes SaskPower, and he's probably unhappy to hear that they're four-square in our corner on small nuclear reactors.

Mr. Speaker, some questions are asked by the public about the safety of nuclear reactors, particularly small modular nuclear reactors, for the environment and for human safety. Mr. Speaker, on the question of safety to the environment, the Clean and Safe Energy Coalition, CSEC, stated that nuclear energy has the lowest impact on the environment, which includes air, land, water, and wildlife. Nuclear energy does not produce harmful greenhouse gases and requires less area to produce the same amount of energy than do other sources of power. Mr. Speaker, I hope that clears up the environmental side of this. And we know that small nuclear reactors produce zero emissions.

As far as the question of human safety, Mr. Speaker, I have more information on that because that is a reasonable question that comes to people's mind when the discussion comes up around nuclear reactors of any kind. Nuclear power plants produce very small amounts of radioactive gases, liquids, and only emit a small amount of direct radiation. Eighty per cent of human exposure to radiation is all from naturally occurring radiation.

[11:30]

The Nuclear Energy Institute has also used the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics stating that it's actually safer to work at a nuclear plant than in a fast-food restaurant, grocery store, or even in the real estate industry.

James Lovelock, Ph.D., informs individuals that receiving an X-ray poses bigger risk to humans as an X-ray machine uses 14 per cent radiation. The UK's [United Kingdom] national radiation protection board reported that compared with known cancerous risks such as smoking or poor diet, the risk from non-medical, man-made radiation's about one-hundredth of one per cent of radiation. The Clean and Safe Energy Coalition has also backed this information by adding that a human would have to live near a nuclear power plant for 2,000 years to get the same amount of radiation exposure that one would receive from a single medical X-ray.

Mr. Speaker, the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements says humans are surrounded by naturally occurring radiation at all times, and 0.005 of 1 per cent of the average radiation a human receives comes from nuclear power. That is 100 times less than we get from coal, 200 times less than a cross-country flight, and is supposedly the same as eating one banana per year. Mr. Speaker, I hope that lays to rest the question of human health.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP, the members on the other side, we're used to their flip-flops on issues of all sorts. They flip-flop on pipelines when the good people from Unifor are in the Assembly. They flip-flopped on nuclear power many times.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Northeast, in 2009 I think when he was vying for the leadership of the party — I'm not sure, but that's usually when we get the best quotes out of them — he

said this:

We came out of a government for the past 16 years and we hadn't reduced carbon emissions or reduced poverty, and we're the socialist party. That's supposed to be our priority, and instead emissions and poverty increased . . . [under the NDP.]

That's what he said.

Mr. Speaker, the leader . . . It looks like I'm not going to be able to introduce all the good quotes that I have . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I might have one from that member as well, Mr. Speaker, but I'm running out of time. So accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I support the government motion.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always an honour to join in with debate, and I'm happy to be able to put some remarks with regards to this debate. To me it's not really a debate because I know the New Democrats have been standing strong about our support for pipelines, unlike what the member across was saying, and also about how we would seriously consider all different options. We know that it's important to consider different options of power generation, but it's also important to look into the information and data. You shouldn't make a decision without looking through all of that.

And I know SaskPower themselves have already have done a lot of information with regards to nuclear energy. I was reviewing some of their information online and, Mr. Speaker, I've always had an interest in power generation as I'm a former SaskPower employee. And I have a lot of friends who still work for the company and I talk to them on a regular basis. My father-in-law was a lineman as well. In Prince Albert we don't have any power generation plants there, but I had an opportunity to tour some of them while I was an employee there, and I also had an opportunity to take some courses with regards to how power is generated. But even with that little bit of information, I definitely would never say that I'm an expert with this information. I am a social worker.

But I did a lot of research on this before coming to speak today, and I believe that's important. As elected officials, we have to speak on a lot of topics that might not be something that we're completely educated on, but I believe it's a duty for us to be informed. And I think both sides of the House should make sure that they're informed on issues instead of just sitting in a seat simply to occupy a seat. So I would encourage all members to research this as well.

So I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the pros and cons of nuclear energy because we know this has been discussed for years. And it's important, like I said, to make an informed decision. This has been on the table for years, but for whatever reason it hasn't been invested in. I believe it's because of the complexity of it and the issues that surround it.

We need to look at different forms of power generation, Mr. Speaker. We're expanding our population. We know that we have some other power generation that is slowly being phased

out, especially the coal. So we have a lot of different options that we can look into investing, such as wind, solar, and potentially maybe even more hydro options. I haven't heard much discussion on that but it would be interesting to see why that doesn't seem to be on the table.

We know that Moose Jaw's getting a natural gas plant, which is going to be important and a good driver for that community. But it's also disappointing to hear that it's not going to be contracted to a Saskatchewan company — not even a Canadian company. It's two American companies that are up for bid for that. And we don't know exactly when that will be up and running, so it'll be interesting to hear more about that.

We know that the shutdown at Cameco and the layoff of hundreds of workers in northern Saskatchewan has had a major impact on those northern communities, but also my hometown, Mr. Speaker. And so we see the trickle effect of those job layoffs, and so far there hasn't been much talk about that opening up again any time soon. And also we know that the individuals working in the coal power plants are concerned about their future and their communities, which are real concerns, and we need to be looking at how we can ensure that these families still have good jobs in this province.

So we know that the government has been talking about nuclear power plants. But when I was doing some research and digging into things, I didn't see any real financial commitment and no real timeline on when that will be happening. I did look to see . . . In Canada I believe we have 18 nuclear energy power plants: 16 of them in Ontario and two . . . one in Quebec and one in one of the Maritime provinces.

And the last nuclear power plant built in Canada was estimated to cost \$3.9 billion, Mr. Speaker, but once it was completed it was 14.4 billion. And I believe that was quite a few years ago, so the cost would definitely be increased. So we're looking at billions and billions of dollars to build a nuclear power plant.

So these power plants take an incredibly long time to plan and build, and the high cost associated with them makes it unlikely that, if a reactor will be built in Saskatchewan, it won't be happening for the next two decades. That's what the experts are saying when I read the information. Those were professors from the University of Saskatchewan that were indicating that. So we need to think about what we're going to do right now.

But when we're planning for a plant . . . Looking at some information from SaskPower when they put forward a paper with regards to what that would look like if we were going forward with a plant. And one of the things that they talked about, was a real issue, was the physical location because there's a large number of important factors that need to be considered, Mr. Speaker. So you need to make sure that you have sufficient quantity and a certain temperature of cooling water available, that there's minimal conflict with other land uses, that there's . . . The proximity to populations is a big aspect as well. They suggest that it stay away from high levels of population but be close enough for loading and transmission of power. We also have to consider the Aboriginal interests when we're looking at developing something like this, and also the heritage impacts of the land that it could be built on, the costs of construction, the transportation and operations.

And we have to ensure that we'll be able to sustain and access the critical capabilities and skills and trades. I have a friend whose son is taking nuclear energy in Ontario, and a lot of the people who are skilled in that area don't come from the province. So are we going to be able to attract them and get them to be working here? The site development and potential access, there's a lot of . . . like the issue of physical setting is a complex one, Mr. Speaker, and we've got to really consider that when we're making a decision here.

The environmental impacts, some of the issues that were brought up when I researched this was that a typical nuclear power plant generates 20 metric tons of nuclear fuel per year. And the problem is that this fuel is highly radioactive and potentially dangerous. It's not a fuel source that you could just simply take to the landfill or leave without worry. It needs to be carefully handled and stored, which costs a lot of money and requires a hefty amount of specialized, designed storage space. So that's something that would need to be considered. It also takes hundreds of years to decompose before it reaches an adequate level of safety.

Then there's the past history of nuclear accidents that we hear about in the public, and people have fear of them. And although they're very few and far between, these nuclear accidents, they do have long-term impacts when they do happen. So we've got to be mindful and considerate of that.

Like I said before, there's a high level of upfront costs and the end-stage costs. So constructing a new plant can take anywhere from 5 to 10 years to build, which costs billions of dollars. Also uranium is not a renewable fuel source. Although we have an abundance of supply right now and it's not a fossil fuel, we can still run the risk of running out eventually. So typically renewable energy sources such as solar and wind are . . . There's an infinite supply of that, Mr. Speaker.

So also the other issue is that uranium has to be mined, synthesized, and then activated to produce energy, and that's a very expensive process. And so where would we access that? Because my understanding is that the SMRs would require the activated uranium which Saskatchewan would have to import from elsewhere, which is a real concern. So there's been a lot of concerns about that.

My time is running out. I could still talk for a long time about this, but I think certainly we can all agree that we should look at all these options. But when we're looking at these options, we can't negate the fact that while nuclear energy operates with little pollution to the environment, it certainly isn't without its environmental impact. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will . . . I think I'm done with my remarks and look forward to hearing more discussion. Thank you.

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

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Energy, clean nuclear energy — what a great topic for today's 75-minute debate — a made-in-Saskatchewan solution to Saskatchewan and the world's energy needs and already a part of Saskatchewan's plan for growth. But this is nothing new, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan uranium has facilitated low emissions nuclear power around the

world for decades. What is new is the advancements in technology with small modular nuclear. And because of this, there is a more promising future for Saskatchewan's nuclear energy industry.

Nuclear energy has been providing low emission energy for decades. And now with the advancement of new technologies in small modular nuclear, better known as SMRs, we have the opportunity to benefit everyone in Saskatchewan.

In 2018 SaskPower participated in a national collaboration chaired by Natural Resources Canada to develop a technical roadmap for small modular reactor deployment in Canada. The final report, titled *A Call to Action: A Canadian Roadmap for Small Modular Reactors*, was publicly released by NRCan [Natural Resources Canada] on November 7th, 2018. The Canadian SMR roadmap is a product of 10 months of collaborative work that engaged more than 180 individuals representing 55 organizations across 10 sectors and sub-sectors in Canada.

[11:45]

Five expert groups comprising of 18 organizations, including SaskPower, looked at questions related to technology, economics and finance, Indigenous and public engagement, waste management, and regulatory readiness. The process also included an initial dialogue with Indigenous leaders from all the regions in Canada. The report runs 82 pages and includes 52 recommendations that, if acted upon quickly, could facilitate the re-emergence of Canada as a global leader in nuclear innovation, establish a new industrial sub-sector that would benefit all regions of the country, and result in the deployment of the first Canadian SMRs as early as 2026.

And here's some key conclusions contained in the final SMR roadmap report. And they conclude that there are several SMR designs being advanced today in Canada through the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission's vendor-design review process that could be commercially deployed, providing power to the grid in Canada by 2026. And SMRs could be a key player in meeting Canada's commitment to phase out the use of conventional coal-fired power plants by 2030, and provide high-temperature steam for heavy industry, and lower the cost of energy in remote northern communities and at mine sites.

Deployment of SMRs in Canada could deliver significant economic benefits in all regions of the country, including up to 6,000 direct and indirect jobs per year between 2030 and 2040 and up to 10 billion in annual, direct impacts and nine billion in annual, indirect impacts over the same time frame. SMRs can be a competitive option in terms of capital cost and electricity price. The report also states that the Government of Canada must play a key role in sharing the risk of developing and deploying the first SMR projects in Canada.

And there have been some important milestones in SMR development in Canada since 2016. Prior to 2016, no Canadian jurisdiction except Saskatchewan had publicly indicated an interest in SMRs as a long-term supply option. No SMR developer was formally engaged in the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission's vendor-design review program, which is an important first step for SMR developers leading to an application

for project licensing. And no SMR developers were actively advancing their engineering designs in Canada.

However Canada has since emerged as a global leader in the regulation, licensing, development, and deployment of SMR technologies, as demonstrated by the following list of important milestones that I think are important to put on the record, showing how SMR technology has evolved recently.

In 2016 six SMR developers were engaged in the CNSC's [Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission] pre-licensing VDR [vendor design review] process. NRCan partners with Ontario Ministry of Energy to study the feasibility of SMR technologies for remote, off-grid mining operations. Also in 2016 Sustainable Development Technology Canada provides 5.7 million to support development of Terrestrial Energy's SMR technology in Canada.

And then in 2017 the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources unanimously recommends federal government support for the development of SMRs in Canada. In that year also CNSC releases draft regulatory documents pertaining to the development of SMRs for industry and public comment. And Canadian Nuclear Laboratories announces plans to invest 1.2 billion to renew nuclear research infrastructure at Canada's largest nuclear research facility at Chalk River, Ontario, with its key strategic focus on supporting SMR development and demonstration.

CNL [Canadian Nuclear Laboratories] also initiates a call for proposals to SMR vendors interested in building their demonstration projects at Chalk River. And the Fedoruk Canadian Centre for Nuclear Innovation provides one point million to support a University of Regina study into the regulatory requirements for siting an SMR in greenfield Canadian jurisdiction like Saskatchewan.

In 2018 the number of SMR developers engaged in CNSC's pre-licensing VDR doubles to 2012. So picking up steam. New Brunswick Power and the Government of New Brunswick publicly announced in that year, 10 million in funding to attract SMR developers with the goal of developing the first SMRs in the province by 2032. The funding is quickly matched by two leading SMR developers, Moltex Energy and Advanced Reactor Concepts, both of which set up reactor and development offices in Saint John.

And the Government of Canada convenes, chairs, and partially funds a national steering committee to deliver *A Call to Action: A Canadian Roadmap for Small Modular Reactors*, which is publicly released in November of 2018. And more recently in 2019, OPG [Ontario Power Generation] publicly announces plans to deploy SMRs for commercial power generation at its existing Darlington nuclear site near Toronto by 2028. SMR developer Global First Power becomes the first company in Canada to apply for a CNSL licence to prepare a site for SMR at Chalk River, Ontario. And OPG announces an agreement to provide technical support for Global First Power site licence application with a view to informing decisions on the future development of SMRs in northern Ontario's Ring of Fire mining development.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it is time now to develop Saskatchewan for a bright future of sustainable nuclear energy.

Saskatchewan accounted for approximately 13 per cent of the world's uranium production and was the second largest producer behind Kazakhstan. Developing this technology would create hundreds, if not thousands of jobs in Saskatchewan while helping to reduce emissions around the world. About 1 in 10 homes in Canada and nearly 1 in 20 in the United States and millions more from other countries receive electricity produced from Saskatchewan uranium. We have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, one that we hope the NDP opposition will support.

But with their fear and smear approach, we don't expect much from their side of the House. And we know that the Leader of the Opposition's position on this nuclear . . . [inaudible] . . . In 2013 in his leadership quotes he said, and I quote, "We can and should say no to the development of nuclear reactors, uranium refineries, and the storage of nuclear waste. Nuclear is not and can never be clean energy."

I will support the motion.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope I get my full 10 minutes here. We'll see what happens to the clock . . . [inaudible interjections] . . . No, they don't want me to talk for 10 minutes, Mr. Speaker.

At any rate we do have a motion before us today with this Assembly, supporting the development of small modular reactors as a pathway in combatting climate change. My biggest question for this motion, and I hope the member from University will have an opportunity to clarify that, is what exactly does he mean by supporting development?

I heard the member from Lumsden-Morse mention the figure of \$100 million. I don't know if that's already been committed by our government, the taxpayers' dollars, to supporting this technology. But it's very unclear when the Premier signed an agreement with Ontario and New Brunswick, very little detail was provided to the taxpayers in terms of what this support actually means for the taxpayer. And, Mr. Speaker, I guess that's sort of where I want to start today. It's . . .

A Member: — So you're against or for?

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, I got the member from Lumsden-Morse. What I'm for is prudent, fiscal spending. And we have not seen that by this government, especially when it comes to the CCS [carbon capture and storage] burden that this government has placed on the taxpayers of Saskatchewan — one and a half billion dollars, Mr. Speaker, and counting. And now we see SaskPower deciding that this technology is likely not going to be used in a number of their power plants. And the jury is still out, although I think they're still deciding. So we want to make sure that taxpayers' dollars are well spent. And you'll hear us talking about that consistently as we go through this journey, Mr. Speaker.

During the last election I was campaigning and I was talking to some physics grad students, a fellow from the grad studies in Saskatchewan who's a physics student. And he was doing work on the small modular reactors. And one of the things he talked

about was, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the benefit of some of the technologies that are being developed is that we can actually reuse the spent fuel rods that currently are just sitting in cooling ponds, Mr. Speaker, across the country, particularly in Ontario.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question for the government is this: if in fact the technology is designed so that it will use spent fuel rods, what will be the impact on our uranium industry here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? Because that kind of technology would of course have a serious impact on our uranium industry in Saskatchewan. We already know our uranium industry is struggling with world prices. We want to see those natural resources brought to the market, Mr. Speaker. But if the SMR technology that's finally selected is one that uses spent fuel rods, then it will have a very significant impact on our uranium industry here in Saskatchewan. So that's definitely one of the concerns that would be raised.

And I don't think any government should go into this blindly with pompoms and, you know, cheerleading into something without asking all the right questions. There has to be a responsible entry into this technology, Mr. Speaker.

And of course the obvious point is that the technology is still a long ways off — I think numbers like 2028, 2030. And the need to act of course when it comes to climate change, which is the basis of this motion today, is that we need to act much more quickly than 2028. There has to be significant changes made in terms of reducing carbon intensity and carbon emissions in the world far before 2028 and 2030.

And I think, you know, much has been said about the direness of the situation, and the world's scientific community has certainly been a leader on that, Mr. Speaker. So to put off attempting to make changes to our carbon emissions now and wait until 2030 for a technology that is unproven and incredibly expensive, needs a government to be calm and thoughtful and open to all the arguments for and against this type of technology.

I just want to share some quotes from an article, Mr. Speaker, because I think it tells us a little bit about some of the problems with SMRs that I think we need to honestly look at. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the quotes I found was from an article . . . There's several here, but it's from the *Nuclear Monitor* issue of 2019. It was in, I think, July 3rd, 2019. And here's one of the quotes:

The jury is still out on SMRs, but unless the regulatory system in potential markets can be adapted to make their construction and operation much cheaper than for large LWRs, they are unlikely to become more than a niche product. Even if the cost of construction can be cut with series production, the potential O&M [operating and maintenance] costs are a concern. A substantial part of these are fixed, irrespective of the size of the reactor.

So I'm hoping this government has done the responsible thing and is looking seriously at O & M costs for this type of reactor.

And here's another quote:

William Von Hoene, senior vice president at Exelon, said last year that no more large nuclear plants will be built in the US due to their high costs and he also expressed

scepticism about SMRs and Generation IV designs. [And he said,] "Right now the costs on the SMRs, in part because of the size and in part because of the security that's associated with any nuclear plant, are prohibitive," he said. "It's possible that that would evolve over time, and we're involved in looking at that technology. Right now they're prohibitively expensive."

Another quote, Mr. Speaker:

Private-sector investment in SMRs has been orders of magnitude lower than the level of investment that would be required to kick-start an SMR industry. Governments in the US, the UK and Canada are subsidizing SMR projects . . . but again the level of investment is orders of magnitude short of that required. A recent US Department of Energy report states that to make a "meaningful" [market] impact, about \$10 billion of government subsidies [\$10 billion of government subsidies] would be needed to deploy 6 gigawatts of SMR capacity by 2035.

Mr. Speaker, here's another quote:

[12:00]

State-run SMR programs — such as those in Argentina, China, Russia, and South Korea — might have a better chance of steady, significant funding, but to date the investments in SMRs have been miniscule compared to investments in other energy programs.

And again whenever you look, there's nothing to justify the high hopes and hype of the SMR enthusiasts. South Korea, for example, won't build any of its domestically designed smart SMRs in South Korea, Mr. Speaker. More quotes: "Smart money left the building . . ." Oh, sorry, that's about Westinghouse who actually went bankrupt developing these technologies, so we don't need to get into the ones that have already lost out on this technology, Mr. Speaker.

Another quote I would like to share with the Assembly is this:

Proponents of the development and large-scale deployment of small modular reactors suggests that this approach to nuclear power technology and fuel cycles can resolve the four key problems facing nuclear power today: costs, safety, waste, and proliferation. Nuclear developers and vendors seek to encode as many, if not all, of these priorities into the designs for their specific nuclear reactor.

The technical reality, however, is that each of these priorities can drive the requirements on the reactor design in different, sometimes opposing directions. Of the different SMR designs under development, it seems none meet all four of these challenges simultaneously. In most if not all designs it is likely that addressing one of the four problems will involve choices that make one or more of the other problems worse.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's clear there's a lot to be said about SMRs and some of the problems that economically, I think, we are facing. A hundred million dollars would not go very far in the development of one of these reactors. They're very expensive to

develop and very expensive to build and very expensive to operate. And so I think we need to keep looking at many ways to combat climate change, Mr. Speaker, and we can't wait for 10 years to do nothing.

So, Mr. Speaker, this government has a lot of decisions to make, and I hope they make the right ones. Thank you.

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

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At a SaskPower consultation that I was at last fall with SARM on the topic of SMRs, SaskPower made it clear that they don't want to be the test case. They don't want to be the guinea pig on this technology. My question for the member from Saskatoon University is this: is your government so insistent on this technology that you're going to push SaskPower into another \$2 billion experiment with taxpayer dollars just like you did with carbon capture?

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

Mr. Oluson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. I wasn't at that symposium or that forum that the member opposite was at, but I do know that SaskPower is a partner in this technology and they are working with Ontario Power Generation, Bruce Power, and New Brunswick Power to develop a proposal for \$625 million in federal funding to support SMR deployment in Ontario, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan. And our share of that funding will be about \$100 million, Mr. Speaker.

So SaskPower is a partner in this with the University of Saskatchewan, with the University of Regina, with Sask Poly. And you know, I have to say that there's no doubt in my mind that the member opposite will fight this tooth and nail and make sure that his opposition is well known because of his past opposition to this, both as a leadership candidate and as a member here in this legislature. So thank you.

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

Ms. Young: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Athabasca rose today and said they're in support of every development in the province of Saskatchewan. That's a bold statement to say, considering the NDP have consistently, consistently voted no to every infrastructure project, initiative, or plan this government has made. To the member from Athabasca: in an NDP government, would the member commit to small modular reactors?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, as we have indicated, the history of the NDP is predicated on the NDP supporting and developing the uranium industry through decades of support, I might add, Mr. Speaker. And that member would know very well from some of her exposure to northern Saskatchewan that the northern Saskatchewan people do support development, Mr. Speaker, every kind of development, as long as it's responsible and

inclusive of all of the people of Saskatchewan, and not simply ignoring and not participating and not engaging participation by the Indigenous communities in the North.

So, Mr. Speaker, again I reiterate. The NDP ushered in the uranium development. We'll continue supporting all development in the province of Saskatchewan as long as it's inclusive and responsible and engaging, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. One of the reasons that proponents of SMRs are touting is that SMRs can use repurposed or spent nuclear fuel. But that wouldn't require the use of new fuel from Saskatchewan mines. So my question for the member from Saskatoon Westview is this: will you still support SMRs if they do not use Saskatchewan uranium?

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

Mr. Buckingham: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. You know, we're going to support the nuclear industry here in Saskatchewan and SMRs and the uranium industry. It produces jobs for people in the North. It creates jobs right across this province. So absolutely we're going to support the industry and make sure that we develop more clean-energy options for our province. So thank you very much for the question.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar-Sask Valley.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2013 the Leader of the Opposition stated that "Nuclear power is not, and can never be, clean energy." Well, Mr. Speaker, the lifetime operation of a nuclear power plant results in comparable emissions to wind and solar energy.

To the member from Prince Albert Northcote: if the NDP opposes nuclear power, then what would they present to replace coal-fired power while still maintaining a stable baseload? And does she want to see the nuclear power industry shut down?

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What the member across has said is ridiculous and is not permanent, and it's not our stance at all. One thing I do know for sure though: when we're building our power generating plants like the one in Moose Jaw, we will build it with our companies, our workers. We'd make sure that Sask workers were building our plants because that's who's paying taxes right here. Thank you.

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

Mr. Belanger: — A question to the member from Saskatoon Westview: we support on this side the \$10 million that is dedicated towards the transition to the coal industry in

southwestern Saskatchewan . . .

An Hon. Member: — East. Southeast.

Mr. Belanger: — Southeast. Does he believe, Mr. Speaker, that the same amount of support should be afforded to the northern uranium workers that lost their jobs, the 900 people that lost their jobs? Yes or no? And why didn't you put your money where your mouth is?

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

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. You know, this government on this side of the House, we support everybody in Saskatchewan. Whether it's in the South, whether it's in the North — we support everybody. We need to develop this to develop more jobs in the North. I'm proud to say I'm part of a government that is very supportive of every person in Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On November 10th, 2015 the *Leader-Post* stated:

Environment critic Cathy Sproule says she wouldn't be surprised if SaskPower is looking into the technology, but the expense of a nuclear project, and the environmental issues, are concerning.

To the member from Prince Albert Northcote, the facts are clear. Nuclear reactors are an opportunity to reduce our carbon emissions. Does the member believe the science or their colleague?

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Like I said before, that building a nuclear power plant is going to take years. It takes a long time to build one and it costs a lot of money. So if it's going to take four to five years to start a renovation on an existing hospital, how long will it actually take to get this done? The people of Saskatchewan can't trust that this government will actually get this done.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have a question for the member from Lumsden-Morse. Does he think that small modular reactors are viable at any point in the near future?

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I thank the member for her question. Yes, the near future, as soon as 2026 we're expected to have operational small modular reactors

available for use. I hope that answers your question.

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

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The member from Regina Northeast stated, "We came out of a government for the past 16 years and we hadn't reduced any carbon emissions or reduced poverty. We're a socialist party."

It seems like even back then they didn't have a plan that would work for Saskatchewan. To the member from Prince Albert Northcote: why is the member from Northeast dismissing the opportunity of this plan if he already recognizes the failure of the NDP plan?

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And now when we want to talk about failures of this government, let's talk about how they failed to build a North Battleford hospital that doesn't have roofs that leak. How about the failing to build an adequate hospital in Moose Jaw that's designed properly? How about you failed to budget properly for the Regina bypass and that skyrocketed in expenses? Saskatchewan people are giving this government a failing grade, and they can no longer trust you.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, the failure of this government to go into this with eyes wide open . . . They're cheerleading and not doing their homework, Mr. Speaker, and that's going to actually cause the taxpayers untold expenses, like the carbon capture and sequestration. We're not looking after transition properly as we move forward in dealing with climate change, Mr. Speaker. And this government's problem is that they don't want to look at the facts, so I think we can't support this.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 618

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Mr. Vermette that **Bill No. 618 — *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2019*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm trying to get my chair out of the way here. It's my pleasure to enter the debate here today on Bill No. 618, around encouraging the government to implement a provincial suicide prevention strategy. There's all kinds of reasons why a strategy is the way

to go here, Mr. Speaker.

My time is fairly limited here today, so I don't think I'll get to cover everything that I'd like, but I'll start with a bit of context here in the province. So numbers from between 2000 and 2018, we had 2,121 suicides here in Saskatchewan. That is larger than many communities that we have here in this province. We've lost more people to suicide in this province than there are people in some of our communities in this province.

Just to point out, between 2017 and 2018 those numbers in fact went up. There was a 16 per cent increase year over year between '17 and '18. These numbers aren't trending down. They're trending up. People are struggling and don't have the necessary supports, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's important to look . . . When we talk about suicide, we look at particular risk groups. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people and young adults between the ages of 15 and 34. Here in Saskatchewan, Indigenous girls are 29 times more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to die by suicide.

So I think that the heartening thing here is suicides are wholly preventable. Suicide is a cause of death which is completely preventable, Mr. Speaker. And it is — the other piece here — it is a public health issue. The World Health Organization recognizes that suicide is a public health issue. This is an issue that needs to be taken on by our Minister of Health, but by no means is it just a health issue. It crosses all sectors, and that actually is the point of a suicide prevention strategy. I think the one thing that I need to point out is the World Health Organization says that suicide prevention takes leadership. So we're certainly calling on this government — this Premier, and this Minister of Health — to take that necessary leadership.

[12:15]

And I just want to draw your attention to a 2014 document around the World Health Organization's very fulsome document on suicide prevention. So just to draw your attention to why a strategy . . . and not just ad hoc . . . It's not that there is nothing going on here in Saskatchewan around suicide prevention. There are good pieces of work here that all could be part and parcel of a suicide prevention strategy. But what we have in this province is not a suicide prevention strategy, and people continue to die.

And for those of us . . . I think that there are few of us in this House who have not been touched by suicide who know that . . . Speaking from experience, I lost a nephew, Jordan, not that many years ago, and I can tell you that it impacted. Obviously Jordan lost his life. He has a brother who lost a sibling. He's got parents who have the biggest holes in their heart, and I can tell you as his aunt that there is a space that will never be filled. I come from a big family and a really great, wonderful supportive family, but our lives are not the same. You find a new normal, but the loss of Jordan by suicide has left a hole that will never be filled, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I think, you know, before I talk specifically about the suicide strategy, I was going to get into the World Health Organization stuff, but I've realized I'd forgotten some important context around mental health here that ties into those numbers when we talk about it being the second leading cause of death for youth and young adults.

Here in Saskatchewan, some numbers from CIHI [Canadian Institute of Health Information] from last spring. The Saskatchewan rate of mental health-related hospitalizations for children and youth, aged 5 to 24, is the second highest of all the provinces in Canada, and of those, the ones connected to substance abuse are the highest in Canada. Saskatchewan is tied for last place in the number of psychiatrists, according to this CIHI data, treating children and youth, and ranked 7 out of 10 provinces on the combined number of resources of psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers whose primary field is mental health issues in children. The number of children and youth hospitalized for mental health in Saskatchewan has doubled in the last decade — the highest rate of growth in the country.

And I know, I talked a little bit the other day about written questions that had been asked and not yet answered. They've been ordered by the government in the last term. I know the latest numbers I had for children and young people waiting for their first consistent appointment with a consistent mental health practitioner, so not a drop-in. Drop-in services are great, but when you have an ongoing issue, you need to build that ongoing rapport and relationship with a consistent therapist. And the numbers . . . There's hundreds of kids. The last number I had there were more than 700 kids across this province in the mild to moderate range waiting for that first appointment with a consistent mental health practitioner.

So the importance of that is to be able to treat and support these young people when they're first putting up their hands saying, "hey, I need help." And those kids need to get that help sooner than later, Mr. Speaker. So that's a little bit about context here.

I don't have tons of time here but this is an important . . . Something I'd like to put on the record that my nephew's mother, Lori, had written to me less than a year after Jordan died. We were talking about what was important to change, what she felt was important, and highest priorities around mental health here in the province. And she writes to me:

There are so many things that need to be fixed about the mental health system, it's hard to prioritize. I reflect on the aspects of his illness that leave me with the most regret. It is that the lack of options available to us when he was psychotic. It's like everyone stands around and waits until he is acutely ill and then the only option is to call the police or drag him into the emergency department. Why can't there be a mobile outreach team that can come to the house, assess, de-escalate, give him an injection if necessary, and try and stabilize him at home?

This was the first person from whom I learned about the third-door option or mental health emergency rooms short-stay and stabilization units, Mr. Speaker. She writes here:

Other centres in Canada and in Australia have developed a third-door option for these psychotic youth that avoids taking them through the emergency room and provides a safe and secure care until they are stabilized. Jordan needed intensive out-patient based therapy. I'm certain that if there had been mandatory daily out-patient therapy available, and not at the Dubé but somewhere more accessible, where someone actually talked to Jordan and where he could have met other kids who were on the way to recovery, that it

might have made him feel more like someone battling a disease instead of a criminal.

There are probably a hundred families on any given day in our health region trying desperately to save their kid and they have to fight tooth and nail to get information from the care team to be seen as the critical support structure they are. It makes it so much more difficult and is so unnecessary.

And you know, that was in 2014, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But having been the Health critic since shortly before that and now the mental health and addictions critic, I can tell you that despite the modest resources this government has brought to bear, new additional resources, things have not improved. In fact I hear from folks on the front line and people with lived experience that it has in fact gotten worse. The demands have increased and care hasn't gotten any better, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I know we had Carey Rigby-Wilcox in here yesterday talking about her son Steven who died in 2018 by suicide by provoking a police shooting, and she talked about the six months — he'd been ill for quite some time — but the six months leading up to his death. If you take a look at his multiple suicide attempts and the lack of coordinated care and attention for this young man, we should all be ashamed that this is what still happens in Saskatchewan. And I know it does actually. So there's Steven.

I've had a conversation . . . There was a first responder last week who was experiencing suicidal ideation and sent home. That wasn't his first suicide attempt. I worked with a woman who swallowed . . . Her attempt involved overdosing, and she went in on a Sunday night and was discharged Monday morning, and was told that someone would get in touch with her. And a day later nobody still had.

And it's not that, like, care in community . . . I'm not saying that we only need to treat people in hospital and hospitalization is necessarily the answer, because it isn't always. But I think there is so much pressure on our system right now, because people can't get into Sask Hospital North Battleford, because they can't . . . They have units, or a unit I've been told, that isn't open because they can't recruit psychiatric nurses. And then the issues around the infrastructure. We get a bottleneck. People can't leave that hospital, so there's multiple things going on here. We don't have step-down housing. And there was a tender that went out, and this government will be building some but not . . . It will fall short of what the government identified needing several years ago. So people in Sask Hospital North Battleford get stuck because there's no place to be discharged for supportive housing.

And then we have people in our acute psychiatric centres, like the Dubé or the General, who don't have a place to go for longer rehabilitative care because there's no room at Sask Hospital North Battleford, so people . . . the constant pressures on our psychiatric care centres and make decisions that doctors are making when you've got challenging patients in the . . . already admitted, but you've got 10 more waiting in the emergency room, and what the heck do you do?

I know that these problems still exist. I have a family member who walked away from the emerg because she didn't get timely mental health care. She disappeared for 26 hours and she's been in the hospital ever since. She almost lost her feet, Mr. Deputy

Speaker. Her feet were frozen solid. She's lucky she survived. It was that cold snap in December.

So these are issues that still persist and in fact are getting worse. So why do we need a suicide prevention strategy? So the minister says, oh we're doing a scan and seeing what other jurisdictions are doing. Which is good. Like it's good to see where others are at and what best practices are.

And then my colleague from Cumberland, who put this bill forward because he attends far too many funerals, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we had the opportunity and were invited to a briefing from the minister, which was very much appreciated. But that briefing just outlined again good things that are happening. There are some good, like bright lights of care that are happening. But the benefit of a suicide prevention strategy is bringing all those together that make sense. This is a public health crisis. It makes sense for the Minister of Health to lead this public health crisis and bring his colleagues in other ministries along, whether it's Corrections and Policing, Social Services, Justice, Education, everybody. All the resources need to be brought to bear to ensure that families don't experience this.

I think one thing that's important to note . . . And the World Health Organization points this out. I've talked a lot about mental health, but there is a myth that only people with mental disorders are suicidal. The World Health Organization points out that suicidal behaviour indicates deep unhappiness but not necessarily mental disorder. Many people living with mental disorders are not affected by suicidal behaviour, and not all people who take their lives have a mental disorder.

So you don't treat someone necessarily because someone has left the hospital. This post-vention piece, the piece after you've tried to take your life, it's not the same mental health care that you get if you have just presented for another mental health issue. Suicide is a very specific thing. So the point about a suicide prevention strategy, it's the process of establishing a wide response. A provincial response itself can improve prevention.

The WHO [World Health Organization] is talking about a national strategy here, but other jurisdictions have implemented strategies on provincial or smaller levels. Quebec implemented a provincial strategy and saw a drastic reduction in deaths there. The creation of a national response provides a rallying point for bringing together a diversity of stakeholders in suicide prevention and for building on their expertise through a participatory approach — so getting us all involved. The result is a convergence of stakeholders from government, NGOs [non-governmental organization], and health and non-health sectors that can contribute to a specific long-term strategy that follows a public health model.

So it's about government. It's about community-based organizations like mobile crisis or Saskatoon Crisis Intervention that I was talking about earlier today. It's about our church organizations who are doing work on this. It's about bringing us all together.

Part of the suicide prevention strategy too is about making sure . . . There's many components to one, but it's about enhancing surveillance in research. So when we talk about that, that's data. Knowing where we need . . . There are universal things that you

can do that target all of us, but there it's also important to take a look at using that data to have more targeted . . . If it's Indigenous girls who are dying by suicide, Mr. Speaker, we need targets and measures there.

So the data collection piece is really, really important, and research around it. It's identifying and targeting those vulnerable groups. It's improving the assessment and management of suicidal behaviour. It's promoting environmental and the individual protective factors, because there are certain things that put us at risk of suicide. It's increasing awareness through public education. I think some people think if we talk about suicide, people will die by suicide. And in fact, it's quite the opposite. If we normalize . . . not suicide itself, but normalize that not all of us always feel good about life and that there are resources that you can . . . that there is no shame in not feeling good about things, and it's not necessarily your fault, and that there can be support for you. So that piece is really important.

Increasing awareness through public education. Improving societal attitudes and beliefs and eliminate stigma towards people with mental disorders or who exhibit suicidal behaviours. Again, there was a time when someone died by suicide that it wouldn't be in the obituary. We wouldn't talk about it at all. And that's still the case. I mean, first responder groups still . . . That I think is a big part. The research that I've been reading around first responders identifies that's still a very big cultural gap. And sometimes we don't always have the best numbers around suicide because often people don't want it to always look like a suicide, their death.

It's about reducing access to means of suicide, making it harder to . . . Suicide often isn't well thought out. It often is an impulse behaviour. So ensuring that you can't climb up on the bridge and jump off the bridge, making those kinds of things more difficult. Encourage the media to adopt better policies and practices towards reporting suicide. And I think our media here in Saskatchewan does a good job of that, but it's about not glorifying suicide or the means of it. And it's about supporting individuals who are bereaved by suicide.

[12:30]

So the importance of a comprehensive suicide prevention strategy led by the provincial government . . . It's great that there's individual pieces that are going on, but that is not enough. Our suicide rates that I referenced at the beginning of my remarks here indicate that we need a strong approach, and the right place that that should be led is by our Minister of Health in conjunction with everyone else.

It's not just up to the Minister of Health, but this is a public health crisis and this is where it falls squarely at his feet. And he needs to be leading this and our government needs to be leading this. We need a suicide prevention strategy here in Saskatchewan. It will save lives and it will ensure that there are not future families who are completely devastated by the loss of loved ones. Everything we can do, we need to bring to bear.

And with that for now, I do hope that I can find some time here either in a budget speech or I may get another opportunity to speak to this. I have much more to say. But with that, I wholly support my colleague from Cumberland's motion and I hope that

the government recognizes that, like, this is not about politics. This is about good public policy that will save people's lives, and I look forward to the government, by the end of this session, supporting my colleague from Cumberland's bill. But with that, I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

The Deputy Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved that this Assembly adjourns. 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 12:32.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hargrave.....	6877
---------------	------

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Fiaz.....	6877
Chartier	6877
Vermette	6877
Sarauer	6877
McCall	6878
Forbes	6878
Belanger.....	6878
Beck.....	6878
Sproule.....	6879
Pedersen.....	6879
Rancourt.....	6879

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Congratulations to Saskatoon Centenarians

Lambert	6880
---------------	------

Concerns of Prince Albert Residents

Rancourt.....	6880
---------------	------

Salvation Army Kettle Campaign Supports Swift Current Community

Hindley.....	6880
--------------	------

Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Services Marks 40th Anniversary

Chartier	6880
----------------	------

Partnership Initiative Provides New Homes for Six Saskatchewan Families

Buckingham	6881
------------------	------

Business Women of Moose Jaw Recognize Award Winners

Lawrence	6881
----------------	------

Swinging with the Stars in Prince Albert Raises Funds for Hope's Home

Hargrave.....	6881
---------------	------

QUESTION PERIOD

Preparedness for COVID-19 Outbreak

Meili	6882
-------------	------

Reiter	6882
--------------	------

Provincial Budget

Meili	6883
-------------	------

Harpauer	6883
----------------	------

Negotiations With Teachers' Union

Beck.....	6884
-----------	------

Wyant.....	6884
------------	------

Global Transportation Hub Land Development

Sproule.....	6885
--------------	------

Morgan	6885
--------------	------

Health Care for Mental Health and Addictions

Sarauer	6886
---------------	------

Reiter	6886
--------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Development of Small Modular Reactors in Saskatchewan

Olauson.....	6886, 6895
--------------	------------

Belanger.....	6888, 6895
---------------	------------

Stewart.....	6889, 6896
--------------	------------

Rancourt.....	6891, 6895
---------------	------------

Buckingham	6892, 6895
------------------	------------

Sproule.....	6893, 6895
--------------	------------

Pedersen.....	6895
---------------	------

Young.....	6895
------------	------

Weekes.....	6895
-------------	------

Fiaz.....	6896
-----------	------

Dennis.....	6896
-------------	------

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES — SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 618 — *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2019*

Chartier	6896
----------------	------

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company

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Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister of Trade and Export Development
Minister of Immigration and Career Training

Hon. Warren Kaeding
Minister Responsible for Rural and Remote Health
Minister Responsible for Seniors

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor
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Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan

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Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Crop
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Minister of Social Services

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Minister of Justice and Attorney General
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Minister Responsible for The Global
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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

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Minister of Education
Minister Responsible for SaskBuilds and
Priority Saskatchewan