

FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

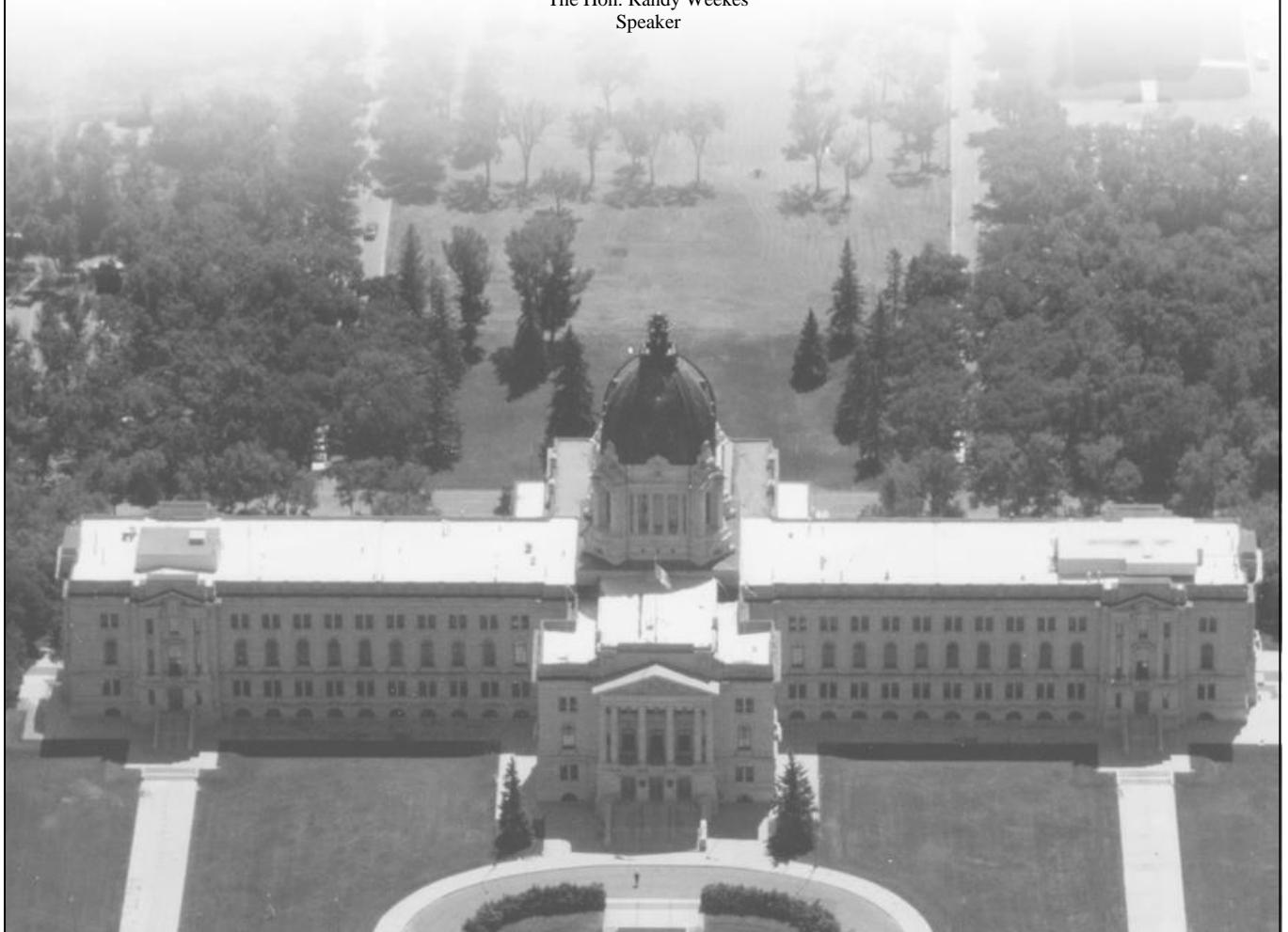
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Randy Weekes
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
1st Session — 29th Legislature

Lieutenant Governor — His Honour the Honourable Russ Mirasty, S.O.M., M.S.M.

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

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Belanger, Buckley — Athabasca (NDP)
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Wilson, Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)
Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)
Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
Young, Aleana — Regina University (NDP)
Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

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

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Deputy Clerk — Iris Lang

Clerk Assistant — Kathy Burianyk

Sergeant-at-Arms — Terry Quinn

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition to reject the proposed Lambert Peat Moss development. Many good northern residents, local trappers, traditional land users, and leaders are opposed to the proposed peat moss mine near La Ronge. The Lac La Ronge Indian Band is opposed. People have drafted a petition to let their concerns be known. More than 20,000 people have signed an online petition.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the provincial government to protect the boreal forest and reject the proposed Lambert Peat Moss development.

This petition is signed by many good people in northern Saskatchewan, but the page I'll be serving today comes from residents of Air Ronge and La Ronge. I so present.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to present a petition again today calling for pay equity legislation. The signatories would like to bring to our attention the following points: Saskatchewan has one of the highest gender wage gaps in Canada, which is the result of systemic gender discrimination in compensation for work, that must be corrected with pay equity legislation.

Mr. Speaker, some critics of pay equity legislation say that it interferes with the free market. However we know this government and others across the country already intervene in the marketplace through market codes, subsidies, tax incentives, and targeted supports for small businesses. So why are women not worthy of government support and intervention too?

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to introduce pay equity legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the petition today has been signed by people from Regina. I do so present.

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and present a petition to save the Lighthouse serving The

Battlefords and provide core funding to emergency homelessness shelters. Saskatchewan is one of the last jurisdictions to fund shelters through a core funding model despite clear evidence that it should.

The Battlefords serving the Lighthouse is a key shelter in that area that is at risk of closing due to the lack of funding from this government. It opened in 2015 to fill a need in the community for homelessness, addiction, mental health challenges, and it had 95 per cent of its funding cut within the first year. And that funding has not been restored.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer . . .

I hear the minister heckling me as I read this petition, Mr. Speaker.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately provide stable, guaranteed core funding to the Lighthouse serving The Battlefords and to expand supports for emergency shelters across Saskatchewan by moving to a core funding model.

The signatories of this petition reside in Meadow Lake and Sweetgrass. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Martensville-Warman.

Craft Beer Week

Mr. Jenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to celebrate Saskatchewan's Craft Beer Week, May 3rd to 8th.

[Applause]

Mr. Jenson: — Hear, hear! Mr. Speaker, in celebration of this event, the Saskatchewan Craft Brewers Association has launched a collaboration beer called Resilience. This limited product features all Saskatchewan ingredients including our world-class wheat and barley, harvested hops from JGL Shepherd Farms near Moosomin, and donated malted wheat from Prairie Malt in Biggar.

Mr. Speaker, our province has a long-standing history of producing high-quality barley and wheat used in beer around the world. Seeing the Saskatchewan Craft Brewers Association and its members work together by utilizing local ingredients to provide a quality product is a testament to the name it bears. The proceeds from the Resilience beer sale will help local brewers, members of SCBA [Saskatchewan Craft Brewers Association], to expand capacity.

Mr. Speaker, the pandemic forced many industries to adapt and make changes. The craft beer industry was no stranger to that. This current initiative shows their adaptability, spirit of

community, and collaboration.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask that all members in the Chamber join me in celebrating Craft Beer Week and thanking the Saskatchewan Craft Brewers Association on a job well done. Cheers.

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

Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise in recognition of Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. This month is an opportunity to learn more about the many achievements and contributions Asian and Pacific Islander communities have had on this nation and our province. Here in Saskatchewan, the diverse communities contribute to the cultural, social, and economic fabric that make our province what it is today. The theme of this year's celebration is Recognition, Resilience, and Resolve.

Mr. Speaker, we must recognize the many challenges and hardships these communities have faced since they immigrated to our country and our province. The pandemic has forced the resilience of these communities to be exacerbated by the rise in anti-Asian hate, and I'm mindful of the racist attack that took place at Mai's Kitchen in my neighbouring constituency of Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota. I urge everyone in this province to stand solidly in denouncing the rise in anti-Asian hate.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to join me today in recognizing the critical and valuable contributions of our Asian communities to our province. I also ask that all members take it upon themselves to combat the anti-Asian discrimination happening in their constituencies and around our province today and every day. There's no place for racism in Saskatchewan regardless of where you sit in this House. Thank you.

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

Provincial Scholarships Awarded to University of Regina Graduate Students

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government, along with the University of Regina, are pleased to announce the 2021-22 recipients of the Queen Elizabeth II Scholarship. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the first recipient of this scholarship, dating back to 1989, is sitting in this very legislature: the member for Saskatoon Willowgrove. Also being awarded today is the Queen Elizabeth II Centennial Aboriginal Scholarship.

These scholarships will help the recipients produce research that will have a positive impact on their area of study for the province. This year there are two recipients. The Queen Elizabeth II Scholarship has been awarded to Holly Campbell to assist her in obtaining a doctorate of philosophy in interdisciplinary studies from the University of Regina. She will focus on developing public policy to better support climate change adaptation in Saskatchewan communities.

The Queen Elizabeth II Centennial Aboriginal Scholarship has been awarded to Natalie Owl to assist her in obtaining a doctorate

of philosophy in education interdisciplinary studies, also from the University of Regina. Her research aims to improve the quality of Indigenous learning education through the creation of a holistic model and to improve future health outcomes for Indigenous communities.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask all members to join me in congratulating Holly and Natalie on earning these well-deserved scholarships. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Remembering Senator Ron Michel

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise today to acknowledge the passing of Senator Robert Ronald Michel. Ron was born December 6th, 1951 in Sandy Bay and passed away on January 25th, 2021 in Prince Albert at the age of 69. Michel was the grand chief of the Prince Albert Grand Council for 12 years and spent over 20 years as chief of Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation. He also served two years as a band councillor.

Throughout his life, Ron contributed to many projects, including enhancing quality of care at the Victoria Hospital. He often worked alongside the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, advocating to government on behalf of Indigenous people. Ron was a great advocate for northerners. He fought hard for his people. He believed in treaty rights. He believed in housing. He believed in health. He fought for those rights.

Ron Michel will be remembered for his deep love for the people and his passion to work towards a better future. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in sending our condolences to Ron Michel's family and friends on the loss of a great First Nation leader. Thank you, my friend. A job well done.

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

Preserving Hospital's Past While Looking to the Future

Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've had the opportunity to celebrate the new; now it is time to commemorate the old in North Battleford. Announced in January, the old Saskatchewan Hospital will be taken down by July 31st. Efforts have been made to preserve items of historical significance including doors, bricks, stonework, and various items that mark more than a century of service. Mr. Speaker, it should be noted that the old chapel is staying, and of note is the fact that the chapel was actually built by a former patient, Emil Schoen.

And of course while we are sad to see the old historic building go, it is important to look forward to the future. And, Mr. Speaker, that future came in the form of significant investments by this government in the last decade, specifically \$407 million to build and maintain the new Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford.

Mr. Speaker, replacing the century-old building, the state-of-the-art facility equipped with 284 beds is among one of the most advanced mental health treatment centres in all of Canada. It is designed to make patients feel as if they're at home rather than a hospital. And overlooking the beautiful North

Saskatchewan River Valley, this home will continue to serve Saskatchewan patients for years to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SaskPower Donates to Jim Pattison Children's Hospital

Mr. Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. SaskPower does much more than just keep the lights on. They're invested in the future of Saskatchewan and everyone who lives here. And I am pleased to report on the completion of a very successful SaskPower campaign which supported the children's hospital in Saskatoon.

Between the 26th and the 31st, every customer who signed up for paperless billing, SaskPower donated \$5 to the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital. Over 6,400 SaskPower customers from across the province pledged their support for Saskatchewan children and signed up for the paperless billing.

I'm happy to announce that with the conclusion of this program, SaskPower will be donating \$32,085 to the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital Foundation helping support pediatric and maternal care. As part of this campaign, SaskPower assisted numerous families that needed access to care in the children's hospital.

I'd like to extend my thanks to those families for their support and for allowing SaskPower to share in their story. Such stories are exactly the reason why the children's hospital is so important to Saskatchewan. Please join me in congratulating and thanking all the SaskPower customers who signed up for the paperless billing, helping support the families. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Regina Innovator Develops Vaccination Tool Locator

Mr. Meyers: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to talk about how a young innovator named Brock Lumbard is helping our province stick it to COVID. Brock is a recent software engineer graduate from Regina, and he used his tech skills to help create a program that helps Saskatchewan residents find a location to get their COVID-19 vaccine.

The tool compiles publicly available data and provides a location via text. Now to use the tool, you simply text your postal code to the number Brock has created and you'll receive information about nearby vaccination clinics, drive-through clinics, and pharmacies. Mr. Speaker, I've used it. It is super slick and it is super quick. You can even check your eligibility through the texting tool.

Mr. Speaker, our Premier spoke with Brock on Wednesday and congratulated him on his innovative idea. Brock hopes this tool will serve as an additional way to find a vaccine and may help those who are a little bit less tech-savvy. Mr. Speaker, SaskTel will be covering the costs of those texts that Brock was actually planning on paying for himself. I encourage everyone to try out Brock's app by texting 1-306-517-7062 and go out and stick it to COVID when they have the chance and when they are eligible.

Please join me in congratulating Brock on encouraging Saskatchewan innovation and vaccination.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over 500 deaths from COVID-19 — that's this Premier's record. Thousands more people sick — that's this Premier's record. Twenty-three thousand people out of work, the worst jobs record in the entire country — that is this Premier's record.

Dithering half measures, posturing, and politicking have led to a terrible record of health outcomes and a faltering economy. The worst of both worlds is this Premier's idea of balance, Mr. Speaker. And he's refused to take any responsibility, to show any humility, Mr. Speaker. He wants people to just forget, to just move on.

But Saskatchewan people want and deserve answers. They want to know why he made the choices he did that led to so many avoidable deaths. To the Premier: today, what is his plan to get grieving Saskatchewan families the answers they deserve? And will he finally show some accountability for his record?

[13:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, we consistently, in this House, see an opposition party that continues to want to look back. Look back, Mr. Speaker. And we have a governing party that, yes, is considering all of the decisions, yes, that we've made, Mr. Speaker, and also considering the decisions that we are making that are allowing us to look forward. Decisions around how we are ensuring that our vaccinations that we receive are being made available to all people in the province, Mr. Speaker.

We're vaccinating in this province people 35 and up across the province, leading the nation with our vaccine rollout, Mr. Speaker. What that has allowed us to now do in this province is to construct a road map, a road map for the people of Saskatchewan so that they can now see what the benchmarks and the metrics are that we need to achieve — all of us together — so that we can find our way once and for all through this COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, we're well on our way to achieving that first benchmark and that is thanks to the dedication of Saskatchewan people in adhering to the public health measures that are in place, and going out and, when it is their turn, they are receiving their vaccination. For that I am forever grateful.

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

Mr. Meili: — Suddenly the Premier doesn't want to look back. A government that only talks about the 1990s suddenly doesn't want to look back. Mr. Speaker, this Premier should go to the homes of every one of those hundred families who lost a loved one since he reduced restrictions back in March and tell them that

there's no cause to look back, that that was a necessary sacrifice to his idea of balance.

Mr. Speaker, with 23,000 jobs lost in the past year, the Premier needs to use every tool available to reduce the damage that he's done to our economy. Mr. Speaker, yesterday his Finance minister, the Deputy Premier no less, showed how out of touch this government is with Saskatchewan people and the realities that families are facing, Mr. Speaker. She said parents who are struggling just need to make some tough choices.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what kind of a choice is it when all you have to choose between is child care that is either completely unaffordable or non-existent? When you're having to choose between your kids and your job, Mr. Speaker, having to choose to live in poverty because there are no affordable child care options — well that's no choice at all.

Mr. Speaker, when will this Premier stand up for working families? When will he do something to give them real choices and get them back on the job, get our economy working again?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, first of all, that is not what the Deputy Premier had said. Second of all, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing a number of provinces across this nation that did participate in lockdowns, Mr. Speaker, and we're seeing some very challenging numbers in a number of those provinces as well. In Saskatchewan we've had appropriate measures in place that are proving to be effective, alongside the widespread access to vaccinations that the Minister of Health, Dr. Shahab, and Saskatchewan Health Authority, and now with our pharmaceutical capacity, are offering.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to jobs in this province, this is a strong record the Saskatchewan Party government has over the course of the last now 13 or 14 years. Mr. Speaker, 70,000 additional jobs were created in this province, Mr. Speaker, largely by private sector investment. Mr. Speaker, yes, we have contracted some of those jobs during this last year while we deal with the COVID measures that have been in place, significant COVID measures in place, to keep people safe.

But, Mr. Speaker, investments are looking again at this province. The Minister of Trade and Export had listed off a number of them in the last couple of days, Mr. Speaker. And investment opportunities continue to be presented to this province because of the effort that this government is making, because of the investment climate that this government has created in this province, and because of the record of Saskatchewan people in ensuring that when investments are made in Saskatchewan, they are successful in Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No matter how loud you yell it, telling Saskatchewan families that are struggling that they should just be grateful for how good they've got it, isn't a particularly good answer to families who are out of work right now.

Not only is this government failing to take any action to get

people access to child care, they've actually been making it worse. The Premier and his ministers left federal dollars on the table until it was almost too late. They refused to prioritize early childhood educators for a vaccine. And they haven't raised the subsidy level once — not once in 14 years, Mr. Speaker.

With tens of thousands of people out of work, will this Premier finally recognize that access to quality, affordable child care is good for jobs, it's good for the economy, it's good for families? And will he finally take some action to get working moms and dads back on the job?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well, Mr. Speaker, yes. That's why we've invested in over 7,000 child care spaces across this province over the course of the last decade. That's why we had campaign commitments in this most recent campaign, Mr. Speaker, to add additional child care places in this province, Mr. Speaker, because we understand, yes, today men and women, hard-working men and women are working; moms and dads are working outside of the home. Yes, some choose to stay home to raise their children, Mr. Speaker, but all have the opportunity to work outside of the home because there are investments being made in this province that are creating jobs.

Mr. Speaker, we heard about the Saskatchewan Mining and Minerals investment, over \$200 million invested there. We saw the three canola crush investments in this province, Mr. Speaker, well in excess of a billion dollars, over doubling our crush capacity in this province, creating jobs in Regina and Yorkton and Saskatoon and communities right across this province, solidifying our opportunities in agriculture for decades to come. Saskatchewan has been a strong place for over a decade now, Mr. Speaker, and that's going to continue out over the next decade.

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

Health Care Coverage

Ms. Conway: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today as human rights critic to advocate for my constituent, to fix her situation, and ensure it never happens again. Ms. Pereira is an Indian citizen who came to Canada three years ago on a student visa. Her child, a beautiful baby boy born last summer in Regina, is a Canadian citizen with a Canadian passport, a Saskatchewan birth certificate, and a Canadian social insurance number. Twice she has applied for a health card for her son and twice she has been denied by this government. Without a health card, her newborn son does not have access to universal health care. Why does the minister deny health care to newborn Canadian citizens, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for bringing this to my attention. Since this is such a specific case, Mr. Speaker, my office would be more than happy to look into this. Obviously there's been something that might have been missed here, Mr. Speaker, so I will endeavour, if the member opposite can pass the information to me . . . Mr. Speaker, I'm standing here trying to offer to help and the members opposite are heckling. If they felt this was important,

maybe they should listen to the answer, Mr. Speaker.

I am standing here, looking at you, saying, please pass the information to my office and we will look into it and rectify the situation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Conway: — Except, Mr. Speaker, that I wrote to this minister in February, in fact, bringing this situation to his attention, asking him to make it right. I have the letter right here that he signed, Mr. Speaker.

Days later the situation of this mother and child became more dire. They contracted COVID. Her son developed serious breathing problems and she was rushed to the ER [emergency room]. Imagine the stress of this mother, Mr. Speaker. So I called the minister's office. I'd already sent a letter, but I called the minister's office. I reached out in real time, explaining the situation. And his response, in his letter, he doubled down on this ministry's heartless policy. Curiously he referenced the health coverage policy for out-of-country visitors.

My constituent's son, as is plainly indicated in the letter, is not a visitor, Mr. Speaker. He was born in Saskatchewan. He is a Canadian citizen. He was born at the Regina General, just like my son. Why, oh why would the Minister of Health refuse anyone, never mind an infant citizen of our country, access to health care in a pandemic?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I assure the House that nobody has been denied access to our public health care system, Mr. Speaker. They have access to our public health care system.

Mr. Speaker, if there is something about this individual's residency, whether they're a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident or a visitor to Canada, Mr. Speaker, there are processes that the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] has in place to be able to work out anything that is financially . . . that is not covered by any other situation, Mr. Speaker.

These are processes that have been long-standing, in place under the previous government, Mr. Speaker. But in this specific case, as I had mentioned before, I will look deeper into this and make sure that we get this situation rectified. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Conway: — Yes, this baby got coverage. And then this mother got a bill, even though this baby is a Canadian citizen. Mr. Speaker, this government won't do the right thing unless it is dragged, kicking and screaming, unless it is named and shamed. But, Mr. Speaker, I didn't expect the Sask Party to flaunt the rule of law.

A child born in Canada is a Canadian citizen. It's entitled to the rights and privilege that accompany citizenship. Quebec recently clarified that all Canadian-born children have undeniable rights

to health care. But the Minister of Health exploits a loophole to deny our youngest citizens universal health care during a deadly pandemic.

To discriminate against a Canadian-born child of immigrants is heartless and it is cruel. Will the minister commit, right now, to ensuring that all Canadian-born children, like Ms. Pereira's son, have access to health care? And will he stop denying citizens their rights in a pandemic, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if the member opposite heard: nobody has been denied access to health care, Mr. Speaker. So I don't know why the member has said that two or three times, Mr. Speaker. Nobody has been turned away from our health care system, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to say that.

Mr. Speaker, in this very specific case, like I said, I will endeavour to look into it deeper, Mr. Speaker. But what I can say is, nobody inside our provincial borders is denied access to health care, Mr. Speaker. That is something that we take very serious. And for the members opposite to accuse us of not taking care of any individual, no matter where they came from, no matter whether they're tourists or not, we always take care of the people that are within our province, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Wait Times for Surgery

Ms. Mowat: — Every Canadian should be able to access health care in our province, Mr. Speaker, full stop. But this young boy isn't the only one facing barriers to accessing care. With nearly 30,000 people currently waiting for surgery, it's a real shame this government's field south of Regina sits empty instead of being home to Brad Wall's surgical centre. Saskatchewan people could certainly use it.

Our already unacceptable surgical wait-lists have ballooned during this pandemic because this government failed to contain the second and third waves. People who are suffering and waiting for surgeries are now facing cancellations. They have no clarity on when they will get the care that they need. What is this government's plan to get Saskatchewan's enormous surgical backlog under control?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I've answered iterations of this question before, Mr. Speaker. We have, in our province and across the country and around the world, have been exposed to COVID-19. We have had to adjust everything in our health care system, Mr. Speaker. While we were doing that, we were maintaining surgical capacity the best we possibly can, while we were also having to defend against COVID-19, but also on the other side of it, Mr. Speaker, to be able to attack that virus through our vaccine clinics, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue to do this and make sure that the surgical

backlog is addressed as soon as we get past this. I know the members opposite certainly don't think that we're past COVID-19 and they would . . . They want this to continue on, Mr. Speaker. But what we need, Mr. Speaker, is to make sure that we are maintaining our health care system. If that means that we have to have to delay some surgeries and some programming, absolutely we have to do that, Mr. Speaker. But that doesn't mean that these won't get addressed in the upcoming months. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, did he just accuse us of wanting COVID numbers to rise when they're the ones who have let it run wild across this province?

Urgent brain cancer surgeries are being punted down the line. These are literally life-and-death situations, and the minister should treat them that way. Families are the ones left dealing with the consequence of this government's failed COVID-19 response.

Over the course of this pandemic, more than 4,000 people have been added to the surgery wait-list. We need a plan to get out of this, Mr. Speaker. And unlike what Regina cabinet ministers are telling people who are suffering while they wait, going to the United States for surgery is not a solution. Again to the minister: what concrete steps will he take to address our surgical backlog?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, we are addressing our surgical backlog. We are doing that while we're also working through a pandemic, Mr. Speaker. I think they've forgotten that. They've switched the channel, Mr. Speaker, to be able to start talking about surgeries, which we have been doing.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, programming and surgeries and some physical therapy, those type of programs, Mr. Speaker, have been delayed because we've needed to draw on our health care system to be able to, one, vaccinate all the people that we possibly can, Mr. Speaker, and be able to defend against this virus, Mr. Speaker.

[14:00]

It's very difficult for us to be able to create people to make sure that we have surgeons, that we have doctors, and we have all of these in all positions. There's a lot of people that we can draw on, Mr. Speaker, and we're utilizing in the best way. And I want to say again, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the people that have been doing this. I understand that people are being very patient in their surgeries.

We're making sure that we're getting done those surgeries as fast as we possibly can. We understand that some surgeries have been delayed, Mr. Speaker, but we're going to work extremely quickly to be able to make sure that we can get those surgeries. How we get there, Mr. Speaker, is through the vaccine clinics. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, this government wants people to be patient while their brain cancer grows. That's completely unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

Our surgery wait-lists had already ballooned well before the COVID-19 pandemic because this government stopped funding their Saskatchewan surgical initiative. And unlike other provinces who have recently stepped up with millions in targeted funding to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on surgeries, this government has not introduced any targeted investment to address surgical waits. And there was nothing in the budget this spring to help get this under control.

This issue won't go away on its own, Mr. Speaker. We need action, or families across the province will continue to suffer for years to come. Will the minister commit to introducing targeted funding for surgeries today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have been talking with all of our surgical capacity, not just within the SHA but also the private system to be able to say, when we are ready and we can get through this pandemic, Mr. Speaker, we need all hands on deck on our surgical side to be able to clear off the backlogs of surgery, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to do this, Mr. Speaker, ongoing because we have to right now, we have to make sure that we keep COVID . . . Are the opposition asking us to pull our resources away from COVID right now and reallocate that to surgeries, Mr. Speaker?

We have to make sure that we're spreading out our health care workers in the best way so we have the right people in the right place at the right time, Mr. Speaker. We can't just pull back from one. We are making sure that there has to be an ICU [intensive care unit] capacity, Mr. Speaker, so that surgery, once that surgery is done, that that person has the opportunity to recover. That's why our health care workers are working extremely strong day and night, Mr. Speaker, to be able to make sure that we can get those surgical beds open and people can start recovering. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — This is ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. They need to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time. Where is the plan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely ridiculous. Our health care workers are doing 10 to 20 tasks that they've never been doing before. And for them to sit over there and slam them because they're not doing more, Mr. Speaker. They just said . . . They stand up here day after day and say how our health care system is stretched. We're working with that health care system, Mr. Speaker, to be able to make sure of that. For them to say that our health care workers, our surgeons, and our doctors can't walk and chew gum, that's bloody insulting, Mr. Speaker. How dare they do that.

These are the people that are absolutely working day and night, not just to keep us safe and our health care system, Mr. Speaker,

keep us safe from COVID, perform those surgeries that need to be done in a timely manner, Mr. Speaker. That member over there should stand up and apologize.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina University.

Small-Business Supports during COVID-19 Pandemic

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And that is not what my colleague said, but it appears that passing the buck is the only strategy that this failing government has.

Now, Mr. Speaker, normally our clueless, worst-in-the-nation jobs minister gives answers in this place that are at the very least, at the very least tangentially related to the questions I put to him. But his disdain of small businesses and his failure to protect jobs was on full display yesterday.

I asked him a specific question: why is this government excluding small-business owners from the Re-Open Saskatchewan training subsidy? Business owners want to know, Mr. Speaker. But all I got back in response was tacky, bumbling, partisan bluster from that flailing and failing minister.

So, Mr. Speaker, I hope by now the minister has had a chance to get briefed up on his files, which he showed so clearly yesterday he knows nothing about. So, Mr. Speaker, why is the jobs minister excluding small-business owners from this training subsidy, and why won't he fix the problem caused by his own incompetence?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — I actually get a kick out of the rhetoric from the members opposite. That was actually pretty good, Mr. Speaker.

With regard to the Re-Open Saskatchewan training subsidy, the fact is that this was a program that we developed in consultation, very close coordination, with our small-business community, Mr. Speaker, as they reopened from the first shutdown during the pandemic in April and May of last year, and we worked very closely with them in developing that.

I would note as well, Mr. Speaker, that those members opposed that program at the time, and the reason they opposed the program is because they opposed reopening, Mr. Speaker, which they continue to do.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have good news on the Re-Open Saskatchewan training subsidy — it was over-subscribed last year, Mr. Speaker. In fact over \$4 million was paid out through the program. Over 1,000 businesses took advantage of that program. It was so successful in fact, Mr. Speaker, we extended it even further.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina University.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And speaking of, you know, wanting a pat on the head and a gold star for a job well

done, this is what we see time and time again from this minister. He rolls out a program, wants all the credit for how great he is, yet he refuses to listen to actual feedback and criticism from real business owners about these shortcomings.

Mr. Speaker, this is not coming from me. This is coming from small-business owners in Saskatchewan. These are real, real small-business owners. Dollars have been budgeted, but they are not being spent because of a technicality of this government's own making. So, Mr. Speaker, why won't the minister change course? Why is he completely incapable of admitting that this was a mistake and extending the subsidy to include small-business owners?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I have here a quote from a real business owner, Mr. Speaker, and I'll read it. This was just today in CJME, and I'm happy to provide this, table this quote for the House:

"I think Saskatchewan has been the most reasonable province in the country through all of this," Walker said. "What was great about Saskatchewan was that they looked on a risk basis, not a symbolic basis."

Mr. Speaker, that's one business owner who operates theatres here in this province who have been able to operate through the pandemic despite shrill cries from the members opposite to shut those theatres down at every single step of the way, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to that, I would read some more quotes here, Mr. Speaker, on the Saskatchewan tourism support program, for example, from the CEO [chief executive officer] of Hospitality Saskatchewan, who represents these organizations, restaurants, and others:

This level of support is unprecedented across Canada, so we applaud this announcement as these programs will be incredibly helpful to tourism and hospitality operators as they struggle through the pandemic. We are very appreciative of the Government of Saskatchewan's steadfast commitment to the tourism and hospitality sector, and their willingness to work with us and continue to establish a path forward in these uncertain times.

Mr. Speaker, that path forward was laid out in even more detail, opposed again by the members opposite.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina University.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While it may make the member opposite unhappy, I will continue to be shrill for small businesses in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, business owners in this province deserve so much better from that minister who has kept them in some sort of lockdown for 412 days. Mr. Speaker, since the pandemic began, he has presided over the largest job losses in the Dominion of Canada, the biggest drop in construction investment year over year. And now he's sitting on his hands while his retraining

subsidy sits underutilized and inaccessible to small-business owners who need the help the most.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the federal government made the same error, and they changed it. But this minister's systematic failure to do his job ensures that there aren't results for real people and businesses. So, Mr. Speaker, why won't the minister fix his mistake and get these dollars out the door to small businesses?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Here's something that every small-business owner in this province knows: if it were up to the NDP [New Democratic Party], they would have been shut down for the past six months. That's what they all know, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm going to make a prediction here, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to make a prediction. The Leader of the Opposition, who has repeatedly called for lockdowns, shutdowns, circuit breakers every single day for the last six months, my prediction is this, Mr. Speaker: you are never going to hear that from him again going forward, Mr. Speaker, because he's going to pretend and act like he never called for that every day because he will have been proven absolutely wrong.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Docherty: — Are we good to go, Mr. Speaker? I certainly enjoyed that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 4, *The Construction Codes Act* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration of the whole on this bill and that it be now read a third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 4 and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 4 — *The Construction Codes Act*

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 4 be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — Third reading.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Mr. Docherty: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 12, *The Wanuskewin Heritage Park Amendment Act, 2020* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill be now read the third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 12, and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 12 — *The Wanuskewin Heritage Park Amendment Act, 2020*

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 12 be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — Third reading.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Mr. Docherty: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 13, *The Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Amendment and Repeal Act, 2020* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill be now read the third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 13 and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 13 — *The Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Amendment and Repeal Act, 2020*

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

[14:15]

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 13 be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — Third reading.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Mr. Docherty: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 28, *The Active Families Benefit Act, 2021* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be considered in Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill be now read the third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 28 and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 28 — *The Active Families Benefit Act, 2021*

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that the bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 28 be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — Third reading.

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND
SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

**Standing Committee on Intergovernmental
Affairs and Justice**

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present its first report. I move:

That the first report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair:

That the first report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice be now concurred in.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In order to facilitate the work of committee this afternoon and this evening, I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This House now stands adjourned till 10 a.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 14:18.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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Premier
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Fred Bradshaw
Minister of Highways
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Water Security Agency

Hon. Lori Carr
Minister of Social Services

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Education

Hon. Bronwyn Eyre
Minister of Energy and Resources

Hon. Donna Harpauer
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Minister of Immigration and Career Training
Minister Responsible for Innovation
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Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
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Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Christine Tell
Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety

Hon. Gordon Wyant
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