



FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

(HANSARD)

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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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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Priority of Debate

The Speaker: — This morning at 10:31 a.m., the member from Regina Douglas Park provided me with the notice to move a priority of debate motion in accordance with rule 28. As required by the law, I notified the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition of this notice. A priority of debate motion proposed by the member from Regina Douglas Park requests a priority of debate of urgent public importance to debate two matters as expressed in her proposed motion:

That the Assembly condemn Mr. Maxime Bernier and the organizers of demonstrations that are contrary to public health orders;

That the Assembly call on the government to immediately introduce mandatory minimum penalties for organizing demonstrations contrary to COVID-19 public health orders.

As outlined in rule 28(5), it is my role as Speaker to decide if the matter is proper to be discussed and whether it should have urgent consideration. The rule also states the Speaker also shall have regard to the probability of the matter being brought before the Assembly within a reasonable time by other means.

The member states that the matter is urgent and must be considered immediately because of events planned later today. I believe sufficient case has been made on this point.

However, in determining the matter, the Speaker is required to pay regard to the extent to which it concerns the administrative responsibilities of the government or could come within the scope of ministerial responsibility. In addressing this point, the member states that government's penalties are inconsequential. I advise the member that the Speaker does not decide the merit of a request based on whether he agrees or disagrees with a matter of opinion. I would prefer that in the future the member leave political arguments out of the request for priority of debate.

Having said that, I do agree that the second part of the member's request falls within the administrative jurisdiction of government administration and ministerial action.

The condemnation of individuals by the Assembly is a different matter. The opinion of the Assembly is not a matter of government administrative responsibility.

Rule 28(6) places restrictions on the number of propositions that may be included in a priority of debate motion. Part (c) of the rule states, and I quote, "not more than one matter can be discussed on the same motion." The member has included two distinct propositions in her motion, which is not permitted by the rule.

As Speaker, it is my duty to ensure all the provisions of the rules are met. It is my determination the member did not meet all the

requirements of rule 28; therefore I deny the application for the matter to proceed as a priority of debate motion.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Meyers: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of Saskatchewan's citizens who are opposed to Bill C-10, put forward by the federal Minister of Heritage. Mr. Speaker, the scope of this bill represents a concerning constraint on individuals' freedom of expression guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Simply put, placing government oversight on creative users of the internet, whether on traditional social media platforms or otherwise, is poor policy.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the federal government to stop Bill C-10 from proceeding, or at the very least make amendments to stipulate that all creative internet content generated by Canadians will be exempt from any regulatory supervision by federal government agencies.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Regina.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan against the \$150 electrical vehicle tax. Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition wish to bring to our attention the following: the citizens of Saskatchewan are concerned with the newly imposed \$150 annual tax on fully electric vehicles that will be applied during SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] insurance registration starting in October 2021, and that an additional tax on electric vehicles will be a barrier for many in Saskatchewan to choose a more environmentally conscious means of transportation.

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 provincial government to cancel the \$150 tax on electric vehicles and invest in charging stations to encourage electric vehicle use in Saskatchewan.

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

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to save the Lighthouse and provide core funding to

emergency homeless shelters. These individuals wish to bring to our attention that Saskatchewan is the only province in Canada that still uses a per diem funding model where emergency shelter for a person facing homelessness is provided only for social assistance recipients per bed, per night. Other provinces use a block funding model where the shelter is funded by providing core funding, and the shelter is open to anyone who needs it.

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 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.

This is signed by individuals from Saskatoon and North Battleford. I do so present.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition once again today calling for pay equity legislation. The signatories would like to bring to our attention the following points: the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission has recommended proactive and comprehensive pay equity legislation, which has not been pursued by the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, proactive versus reactive pay equity legislation provides for government monitoring, support services for employers, and recourse to a tribunal where issues are in dispute. This form of legislation recognizes that discrimination in the setting of women's wages is widespread and deep-rooted. It provides a systemic solution to a systemic problem, 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 Government of Saskatchewan to introduce pay equity legislation.

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

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — miigwech, 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 northern people in Saskatchewan. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

National Police Week

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in my place today to recognize National Police Week. We are proud of the hard work that our police officers across the province do every day. Mr. Speaker, our government partners with police agencies around the province to deliver a number of programs and services to our communities. These programs keep citizens safe, support victims through police-based victim services, protect the most vulnerable, and assist those in need.

Recent partnerships include initiatives such as the Saskatchewan crime watch advisory network, the provincial protection and response team, and the Saskatchewan gang-violence reduction strategy. Our government also provides approximately 15.7 million annually to municipal police services to fund 130 municipal police positions and targeted policing initiatives. This includes positions within the Saskatchewan internet child exploitation unit, police and crisis team units, and the Combined Traffic Services Saskatchewan, and more.

Mr. Speaker, this year's budget includes additional funding of 110,000 to support the creation of the new PACT [police and crisis team] unit in the Estevan region, and 243,000 to enhance the capability of provincial ICE [internet child exploitation] units. Mr. Speaker, our police enforcement across this province work tirelessly to protect our communities, and we thank them for their dedication to this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Lack of Support for the North during Pandemic

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's good to be back. It's good to be back in the Assembly to hold this government to account for the many ways that they have failed Saskatchewan, especially the North. Mr. Speaker, I had to stay back home self-isolating because I caught COVID a second time.

When COVID first appeared in the North, municipal, Métis, and First Nations leaders pleaded with the province to help them protect their northern people. The Sask Party did nothing. When the pandemic hit the North, what did the Sask Party do? They sent armed officers at highway intersections to lock in COVID-infected northerners.

The Sask Party then pocketed \$450 million, that they received from the federal government, to help cut their deficit. That money was sent to Saskatchewan to help fight COVID. They then turned around and took 360,000 from a northern lease fund to allocate to 40 communities of the North. That was it, Mr. Speaker. During the height of COVID-19, the Sask Party hid. No minister could

be found to stand up for the North or Saskatchewan.

Like I said, Mr. Speaker, it's good to be back, and good to be here in the Assembly doing the work that the people of Athabasca sent me to do. And they have a message. They're calling this government out for the way they have abandoned Saskatchewan people and failed the people of northern Saskatchewan. And their message to the Saskatchewan Party: shame on you.

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

Saskatoon Business Icon Retires

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you lived in Saskatoon and area over the past several decades and you are a true believer in quality fashion and service, one name comes to mind: Elwood Flynn. Starting in 1946 as a student at Nutana Collegiate, Elwood landed a summer job in a menswear store. There was no sitting around. He was either polishing, cleaning, or running errands. After his first month, he received a healthy raise to \$14 a week.

For the next 75 years, Elwood offered beautifully tailored suits, fine-quality shirts, and menswear essential to loyal customers, including hockey legend Gordie Howe, former Lieutenant Governor Tom Molloy, and the son of blues legend B.B. King.

While he said he loved fashion, it was the people that made his career rewarding, Mr. Speaker. Elwood is quick to point out his good fortune of having excellent staff: Ryan Walter, Rob McNab, Barry Flynn, Elaine Walker.

It was with heavy heart he recently announced his retirement. His legacy will reflect his motto where fashion is a way of life and style is a never-ending tradition. As we bid farewell to this Saskatoon business icon, I ask all members to join me in thanking him for his outstanding service and commitment to the Saskatoon business community. Well done, Elwood Flynn. Well done.

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

National Nursing Week Celebrates Vital Role of Nurses

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour National Nursing Week. In 1971 May 12th was designated as International Nurses Day in recognition of nursing pioneer Florence Nightingale's birthday. In 1985 the federal government passed a resolution that the week of May 12th be designated National Nurses Week annually. In 1993 a name change to National Nursing Week emphasizes not only nurses, but also the profession's accomplishments as a whole.

We celebrate National Nursing Week each year to recognize the vital roles nurses play in the health of our province. As the world continues to grapple with COVID-19, nurses demonstrate leadership managing, responding to, and recovering from the pandemic. This week we celebrate their commitment.

Every day, registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, nurse practitioners, and licensed practical nurses answer the call for people across Saskatchewan. This week we have the opportunity

to reflect on all the contributions nurses make to the well-being of Saskatchewan people. Nurses touch our lives in so many profound ways, from the time we enter this world to the time we leave it, providing care and support during many of our happiest and our saddest moments.

[13:45]

Thank you to Saskatchewan's RNs [registered nurse], RPNs [registered psychiatric nurse], NPs [nurse practitioner], and LPNs [licensed practical nurse] for the vital role that they play.

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

Young Philanthropist Changes the World with Kindness

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, about a year and a half ago I had the opportunity to introduce to this House Catherine Okolita and her parents, Caralen and John, Mr. Speaker. For those that perhaps don't remember, Catherine is a 12-year-old young philanthropist from Fort Qu'Appelle. She's created Catherine's Cause, a community initiative that has raised thousands of dollars for organizations like cancer support groups, food banks, humane societies, schools, and hospital foundations.

Mr. Speaker, Catherine has been at it again. She was also named the Hospital of Regina Foundation's first-ever pediatric ambassador, recognizing her for her efforts in fundraising for the Z99 radiothon.

This year, she has hosted her fourth annual NICU [neonatal intensive care unit] online auction, saving babies' lives. This year, her online auction had 812 items. One of them might even have been a signed bib from a competition from Mark McMorris, as a matter of fact. Of these 812 items that were donated and auctioned off, Catherine raised \$51,485. Catherine's motto, Change the World with Kindness, is so powerful, and we can all benefit from her initiatives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Honouring Nurses and Continuing Care Assistants

Ms. A. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May 10th to 16th is National Nursing Week. We are fortunate to have highly trained, compassionate, and dedicated nurses in our province. We've seen these qualities in action in this past year, as the province battles the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, we are grateful for our registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, licensed practical nurses, and nurse practitioners. We applaud them for their courage, and thank them for the sacrifices they make every day. In 2019, more than 16,000 nurses were practising in Saskatchewan. That's about 4,000 more than in 2007.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to recognize May 12th as Continuing Care Assistants Day. These are the caring health workers who provide long-term care and home care to some of Saskatchewan's most vulnerable citizens. We thank them for

their courage and dedication to keeping residents safe.

Mr. Speaker, we are keeping our promise to hire more continuing care assistants in communities all over the province. Our provincial budget is providing \$6 million for 108 new positions this year. Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in recognizing our nurses and our continuing care aids for their committed service to the people of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Vaccination Numbers Help to Reopen Saskatchewan

Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's best-in-the-country vaccination program had another great weekend. On Saturday we surpassed a half a million total shots, and on Sunday Saskatchewan reported its highest one-day total for vaccines delivered: more than 13,600.

Over 50 per cent of all Saskatchewan adults have now received their first shot. And most importantly, yesterday the Premier announced that Saskatchewan reached the first threshold on our Re-Opening Roadmap. More than 70 per cent of Saskatchewan residents aged 40 and older have now received their first dose of vaccine, and that means Saskatchewan will move into step one of reopening on Sunday, May the 30th.

Today the eligibility age was lowered to 29. It's going to continue dropping until May 20th, just 10 days from now, when everyone 12 years of age and older will be eligible to get their COVID vaccine. And on May 17th we start giving second doses.

Mr. Speaker, all of this is thanks to the thousands of Saskatchewan health care workers administering vaccine shots in clinics and pharmacies in every part of our province. And it's thanks to the hundreds of thousands of Saskatchewan residents who are going to these clinics and pharmacies every day and getting vaccinated. The road to reopening runs through these vaccine clinics, and Saskatchewan is now barreling down that road at full speed.

So let's keep it up, Saskatchewan. When it's your turn, book your appointment, roll up your sleeve, and stick it to COVID.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Support for Harm Reduction, Mental Health, and Addictions

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Five hundred people have died from COVID-19 in Saskatchewan, nearly all since this Premier was re-elected on a promise of no more lockdowns, on no second waves, basically telling people that this was already over.

But these aren't the only preventable, avoidable deaths this Premier has presided over. 377 people died from accidental drug overdoses in 2020; 138 have already died from the same cause this year. Mr. Speaker, nearly as many people have died from

overdoses as from the pandemic. And no vaccine will get us past this ongoing public health nightmare.

We don't hear as much about them, but these aren't just numbers. They are names. They are real people, Mr. Speaker. They are people's loved ones lost suddenly and finally . . . We've got members heckling while we're talking about the lives of people who were lost to overdose. That's the attitude in this House, Mr. Speaker.

Why, when shown by internal government reports that advised the Premier that investing in Prairie Harm Reduction would save money and save lives, why did he choose to do neither? Why did he turn a blind eye to our overdose crisis?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, the leader is correct with respect to one of the greatest challenges that we do have in this province — pre-pandemic and most certainly throughout the pandemic, and it will be waiting for us when we exit this pandemic, like it will be for many provinces in Canada — is the challenges of overdoses, mental health, ultimately subsequent addictions in our communities, Mr. Speaker.

And most certainly where the Leader of the Opposition is incorrect is this government most certainly has not turned a blind eye to investing in solutions. So when it comes to mental health and ultimately addictions and addictions treatment, Mr. Speaker, this most recent budget was \$458 million invested in mental health and addictions here in the province, the appointment of a minister to look over that ministry, Mr. Speaker, the first Minister of Mental Health and Addictions that this province has had.

That \$458 million includes a \$23 million lift this year that builds on a \$30 million lift last year, builds on a \$30 million lift the year previous. Mr. Speaker, mental health and addictions is most certainly something that this government takes very seriously and will continue to take very seriously into the future.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a simple question. The Premier was told that if he invested in Prairie Harm Reduction, the public would save money and we would save lives. Why did he want to do neither of those things, neither save public dollars nor prevent avoidable deaths? Why did he refuse to fund Prairie Harm Reduction?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, once again in this Assembly the Leader of the Opposition is incorrect. We do invest in Prairie Harm Reduction to the tune of about \$900,000 annually. We do invest in harm reduction in this province, over two and a half million dollars annually. Mr. Speaker, it's part of a \$458 million investment in mental health and addictions in communities right across this province.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions has outlined in this budget a number of investments that, yes, are investing in harm reduction in communities across the province, investments that are investing in the capacity of not only our

detox beds and capacity in this province, Mr. Speaker, but a significant investment in actual rehabilitation for these individuals, so that when they do decide to take a different path, that we have the rehabilitation, the detox and rehabilitation capacity to provide that service to Saskatchewan people.

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

Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well maybe if that was true, we wouldn't see Prairie Harm Reduction having to fundraise to provide essential services. Alarming disregard from this Premier for public health, for people's lives, Mr. Speaker.

It seems the Sask Party's got two wings. They've got their Buffalo wing that doesn't care about public health, that wants to break up Canada, and their chicken wing, that's too afraid to stand up for either. And the way this Premier flops and flails, it's hard to tell which wing he's flapping or who's flapping him.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier was slow. He was slow to recommend masks, and in fact when he was asked about anti-mask protesters back in September . . . The member will remember this. Back in September the Premier was asked about anti-mask protesters. And what he said . . . What did he say? He said, ah, they don't have to wear masks as long as they can keep a couple metres away from each other. That was his answer when asked about people protesting public health measures, Mr. Speaker.

Five hundred people have died from COVID-19 in Saskatchewan. Thousands more have had their health and their employment damaged thanks to uncontrolled second and third waves under this Premier, Mr. Speaker. Does the Premier regret being so cavalier? Does he regret failing to condemn the madness of anti-mask protests in the middle of an airborne pandemic? Does he regret the dog whistles that he has used that have allowed this foolishness to grow?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, a number of questions in there. I'm going to address a couple of them. With respect to a rally that had happened a couple of times, apparently a few rallies this past weekend . . . There's a failed federal leadership candidate that is craving attention, and I'm not going to provide it to him.

Mr. Speaker, the folks that want to remove the public health measures that we have in this province, the quickest way for them to do that is to make an appointment in one of our vaccination clinics and get vaccinated, Mr. Speaker. That is our road through to the end of this pandemic. We have been very clear about that throughout this pandemic.

With respect to the earlier question, Mr. Speaker, or earlier on in that question about mental health and addictions funding here in this province, Mr. Speaker, we're very, very proud in this government to provide \$458 million to communities and families across this province for mental health and addictions, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, it invests in harm reduction. We're expanding our naloxone kit, for instance, Mr. Speaker. It invests in ensuring people can

get in front of the services that they require, with our urgent care centres that will be being built here in Regina as well as in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker.

And it invests almost a million . . . Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition may laugh at this answer, but it invests nearly a million dollars, important dollars, in family rehabilitation services, rehabilitation services for families that have a family member struggling with mental health and addictions, Mr. Speaker. Hardly a funny matter. Serious investment, part of an almost half-billion dollar investment by this government. A conversation that's going to continue, and it's going to continue to be invested in by the Saskatchewan Party government.

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

Mr. Meili: — The emptiest barrels make the loudest noises, as the saying goes, Mr. Speaker. The volume raises, but the content is empty. Mr. Speaker, the Premier saw the idiocy this weekend. He saw Maxime Bernier, the near leader of his federal party. He had lots of support from members on that side when he was running for leader. This conservative politician was touring anti-mask rallies across this province in the middle of a pandemic, Mr. Speaker.

But this isn't just about Maxime Bernier. The Premier has a role in this himself. He knows. He was reluctant to promote masks, and he was reluctant to criticize his own supporters who were out protesting masks, Mr. Speaker. Does he regret the space that he's given this movement? Does he regret how much he's allowed this foolishness to flourish with his mixed messages throughout this pandemic?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, as I said, as I said earlier, almost certainly the actions of these folks at these rallies advocating for others to break the public health orders and breaking public health orders themselves, Mr. Speaker, I condemn those rallies and what they stand for, as does the Government of Saskatchewan condemn those rallies.

Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing here is a true narrative, a true narrative of the opposition coming into this House and levelling accusations — and they should ask fair questions — but levelling accusations at myself and the Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And we can go through the list around, you know, the jobs records here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and many accusations with respect to where Saskatchewan ranks with jobs in this country and that it has the worst job record in Canada. That was actually under the NDP [New Democratic Party]. We now have the strongest job record in the nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

They come in and they criticize the measures that are in place that are proving to work even today, Mr. Speaker, as the caseload continues to decline here. They criticize the testing and contact tracing that is being performed by our hard-working health care workers in community after community across this province.

And most notably, Mr. Speaker, they criticize the leading,

first-in-Canada vaccination plan that we are putting forward a vaccination plan that is making vaccines available for everybody in this province, in particular those from the North, Mr. Speaker, to the member from Athabasca. But a vaccination plan that is allowing, allowing this province to not only lead in delivering vaccines but now lead in charting our path out of the COVID pandemic. Mr. Speaker, we've provided a road map for Saskatchewan people and now we're going to follow it.

[14:00]

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

Penalties for Non-Compliance with Public Health Orders

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, last Saturday I brought an amendment to committee that would have imposed mandatory minimum fines for the organizers of anti-mask, pro-COVID rallies that are putting people and our health care system at risk. What did the minister say then? "... we just think that it's unnecessary given the existing legal provisions that exist."

Fast forward one week and we have Maxime Bernier, or he who shall not be named according to the Premier, travelling across the province with hundreds of people in Saskatoon, Regina, Lumsden, Davidson, and more events planned as we speak in Rosetown and Milden.

Does the Minister of Justice agree with me that the existing legal provisions aren't sufficient? And does he regret not acting last week to introduce mandatory minimum fines that could have deterred these dangerous rallies?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I find it remarkable that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would stand up and advocate for mandatory minimum fines. And I don't believe amending the fine schedule is going to deter certain individuals from their non-compliance with our public health orders, Mr. Speaker.

We have a full suite, Mr. Speaker, of legislative penalties that are available under *The Public Health Act*. The amendment that the member proposed last week was to the emergencies Act, when she knows full well that the charges are all being brought under *The Public Health Act*, Mr. Speaker. So in the event that the amendment was even to be made, it wouldn't be having any effect anyway.

There are certainly a large number of penalties and provisions available under the law to deter people from attending and from promoting these rallies, Mr. Speaker, whether that's under *The Public Health Act*, the public health orders, the emergencies Act, *The Summary Offences Procedure Act*, and on and on, Mr. Speaker.

So no, I don't regret not conceding to her amendment, Mr. Speaker. We have a full suite of laws that are available, and we have a police force and public health officials that are willing to enforce those laws.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Douglas

Park.

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, the status quo just isn't good enough, and it obviously isn't working. Bernier and his allies posted photos to social media this weekend holding up their tickets and wearing so-called \$2,800-freedom-of-speech buttons. These paltry fines aren't being seen as an effective deterrent by these people breaking the law. They're being seen as badges of honour.

Later today I'm introducing a private member's bill that will be very, very familiar to the Minister of Justice, and I think he'll be very amenable to it based on his last answer, and members of the committee will also be familiar to it as well. Will the Minister of Justice finally admit that he made a mistake and commit to increasing the fines for these illegal protests today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I'll make no such admission. Fines and penalties available under *The Public Health Act* are \$75,000 for a first offence, up to \$75,000; \$100,000 for a second offence; and different ... a higher set of penalties for corporations. There are significant penalties that are available under the laws of the province of Saskatchewan to ensure compliance with our public health orders, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure what the member would suggest. If people are holding up \$2,800 tickets as a badge of honour, what makes them think that they're going to comply with \$10,000 orders, Mr. Speaker? We have a full set of penalties. We have full confidence in the police services and public health officials in this province to enforce them, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to encourage them to do just that.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader can laugh through these questions, but it's a serious issue. Bernier and his ilk are co-opting our cenotaphs — these are monuments to those who died fighting fascism — to complain that wearing a mask and keeping 6 feet apart is modern-day fascism. It's disgusting. It's wrong. And it's an insult to all those who have ever fought for our freedom.

But these rallies don't deserve steep fines because they're offensive. They need to be met with serious consequences to protect our health care system and stop the spread of COVID-19. With our ICUs [intensive care unit] at critical capacity and hundreds of new COVID cases every day, these dangerous demonstrations cannot be allowed to continue. Our province is under a state of emergency, and it's long past time that the Sask Party acted like it.

Again, when will this minister increase the fines and provide some real deterrents to stop these superspreader rallies?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, the member will know that we increased fines under the emergencies Act. That legislation is pending Royal Assent on the floor of this Assembly.

But the charges are being brought under *The Public Health Act*, Mr. Speaker, where penalties can range up to \$75,000. That's a significant penalty for an individual. As I've said many times on the floor of this Assembly, including twice today, we have confidence in our law enforcement, our public health officials to properly enforce the law. We want to encourage people to comply with public health orders, Mr. Speaker.

We find the actions of Mr. Bernier on the weekend to be offensive, Mr. Speaker. We do. But at the end of the day, we do have a full set of laws. We do have a full set of penalties that'll encourage people to comply with the legislation. We'll continue to encourage law enforcement to fully enforce those laws and fully enforce the penalties that are in effect. But certainly, Mr. Speaker, there's no indication that increasing the penalties . . . putting a mandatory minimum is going to at all influence anyone from not complying.

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

Paid Sick Leave and Supports for Employees

Ms. Bowes: — Mr. Speaker, I was floored with the answers of the Deputy Premier on Friday when I asked about paid sick leave. I asked if the government would make the choice to work with our side of the House to make paid sick leave a reality. The Deputy Premier refused to answer a simple question and waxed on about — sorry, let me check *Hansard* — fifth wheel campers and fancy holidays.

Let me once again ask the question, plain and simple: will the Sask Party support our bill for paid sick leave in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. What I would like to do is encourage the members opposite to do something that would be beneficial and helpful to the workers in our province. I'd urge them to call out and meet with their federal counterpart, Jagmeet Singh, and urge him to have the federal government spend the \$645 million, half of the funds that are allocated to the federal recovery program, so that those funds can be used to top up and do what is necessary to ensure that our workers do not have to return to work when it is unsafe to do so, and that they're using money that has already been committed, taxpayer dollars spent and committed.

And that's what the members opposite should be doing, Mr. Speaker. That's an option that's open to them. They seem reluctant to even admit that they're part of that party unless it meets their political whim of the day. I'd urge them to get on with it and sit down and do some work to try and make sure that that happens.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about an option that is open to this government, this provincial government. Working people should have access to paid sick days at all times. During a pandemic, and as more and more people are going back to work

in offices, restaurants, and rec facilities, it's absolutely necessary.

Mr. Speaker, 41 outbreaks have been declared in Saskatchewan just in the first week of May, 30 — a full 30, nearly three-quarters — in workplaces. People are bringing COVID to work and many people don't have the choice to stay home. Paid sick days would reduce COVID cases, ease the cost on our health care system, and save lives, Mr. Speaker. So will the minister look at the facts and do what's right?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Labour Relations and public safety.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we received the one-page bill that the members opposite presented last week. Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat surprised when I had a look at it, and it said that it would require employees and employees . . . to provide employees with paid sick leave of not more than 10 days in a 12-month period. So if you have a situation where you've already got 12 or 15 in the collective agreement, are you intending to reduce it to the maximum of 12? Who determines how much less than 12 it is?

I'd urge the members opposite to sit down, take a careful look at the drafting that was in this, and sit down and try and do something productive. What they might do that's productive is reach out to their federal counterpart, ask him to try and commit to having some of the federal money sitting . . . have it put into the programs. Have it there so that it's there for people that need it; use the public health emergency leave; use the leaves that are already in our legislation which require up to 12 days . . . Mr. Speaker, I heard the members opposite chirping that they don't like that idea. I'd urge them to like it a lot.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Mr. Speaker, I hope this isn't asking too much, but I would expect that the Minister of Labour understands that *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* provides a floor. It's not a maximum. So collective bargaining agreements can go well beyond that, and he knows that. Mr. Speaker, it's hard to get an actual answer from this government on supporting paid sick leave. Sometimes it's no. Sometimes it's maybe. Sometimes they reject the premise of the question altogether.

The Sask Party loves polls. They're always talking about them so here's one, Mr. Speaker. Four in five people agree that the government should make all employers provide paid sick leave for all employees. Rural folks, urban folks, all ages and all partisan backgrounds overwhelmingly support the notion. When 70 per cent of conservatives agree on this, the debate is over, Mr. Speaker.

Paid sick leave is not just good policy; it's good politics. Will the Sask Party do the right thing, the popular thing, and introduce paid sick leave today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Labour Relations and public safety.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we want to do everything we can to ensure the workers of our province have jobs to go to.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we have to do is make sure that those jobs continue to exist and that those employers stay viable. Those employers have worked hard to stay alive and to stay afloat through the pandemic.

The last thing that we would want to do at this point in time is add a cost to them that could actually, if you start to add it up, add hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars in further liabilities. Whether it's used or not, it becomes a contingent liability. Those people have to go back to their banks and say, keep us afloat for another week, another month, another two months as we work our way through this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, we want jobs that continue. We want people to be able to go back to work, have their jobs there, and continue to do exactly what they're supposed to. We have a comprehensive suite of remedies and benefits that are available. We've got 12 days of sick leave that are there. We've got leaves for serious illnesses of a worker and of their family . . . [inaudible] . . . and we're going to continue to support them, Mr. Speaker.

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

Racism in Health Care System

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — miigwech, Mr. Speaker. Postmedia reported last week that the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] conducted an internal survey of employees that revealed racist attitudes towards the Indigenous peoples of the province. The responses included comments such as “colouring the workforce” and suggestions that catering to Indigenous people is actually causing racism in our province.

This is deeply troubling, Mr. Speaker. It could have been a teachable moment. Instead this government has chosen to shelve this report alongside so many. What is this government's plan to address systemic racism that's revealed in this report?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the member opposite for the question. It's a very important issue. And I will state right now there is no place for racism within the SHA, within the Ministry of Health, or within the Government of Saskatchewan. This is just not acceptable. I saw the results from some of the surveys, and it certainly bothered me that these were actually being articulated and people were thinking this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what I can say that under way, that we have within the SHA is we're requiring all new employees to undertake cultural responsiveness training, setting goals to achieve a representative workforce, developing a formal unity and belonging strategy, and furthering our commitment to implement the truth and reconciliation Calls to Action.

Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no place in racism within my ministry or within this government. And we'll continue to make sure that everybody feels welcome in their workplace. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Centre.

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And this is coming from somebody who told me “the only reason you got this job is because of the partnership we have with the Saskatoon Tribal Council.” Mr. Speaker, as a start this government could increase representation of First Nations people working in senior leadership positions in our health system.

We received access to information that only 4.2 per cent of the SHA employees identify as First Nations. The makeup of organizations like the SHR help shape the culture and perspectives within them, Mr. Speaker. What steps will this government take to increase Indigenous employment in our health sector?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I categorically deny that accusation.

[14:15]

I have had a long-standing working relationship with STC [Saskatoon Tribal Council] prior to being in government, Mr. Speaker. And that continued while I was in government as a backbencher, while I was in my role at Social Services, and was actually honoured by Saskatoon Tribal Council with a blanket at their annual ceremony that was wrapped both around my wife and I for the work that I did with Saskatoon Tribal Council. For them to say anything about that is absolutely hurtful and it's unnecessary, and it doesn't have to do anything to what we're talking here, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what I've seen over the last few days is they're running out of budget questions. They're running out of policy questions. Now they're running out of COVID questions. So what do they do, Mr. Speaker? They come at us with personal attacks. Mr. Speaker, that has no place in this House, and it's very disappointing. And I'd love to be able to answer one more question. I'll give her the opportunity to ask one more question. I'd love to be able to get an answer. Thank you.

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, this actually did happen in the early '90s when I worked for a Crown corporation and that statement was made. And that continually is made to Indigenous people whether they work in the health sector or in other sectors of this province. Racism does exist. So what is this government doing to address the systemic racism that Indigenous people experience continually, daily, in this province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, I was a little confused about the preamble there. But as I said, Mr. Speaker, racism has no place within the Health Authority, within the Ministry of Health, and within the government, in all ministries, Mr. Speaker. And if anybody is saying racist comments, they have no place in our workforce, Mr. Speaker.

As I went through the list of what we were doing within the SHA, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that everybody, everybody, no matter what their race, religion, creed, their sexual orientation is, Mr. Speaker, we try to make them feel welcome within our workplace. If anybody in the SHA has any concerns about that, Mr. Speaker, I ask them to call my office within the ministry, and I'll make sure that it is dealt with appropriately. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services 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 Human Services be now concurred in.

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

That the first report of the Standing Committee on Human Services 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 Chair of the Standing Committee on House Services.

Standing Committee on House Services

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on House Services to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present its sixth report. I move:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

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

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on House Services 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 member from Regina Douglas Park.

MOTION UNDER RULE 61

Enforcement of Public Health Measures

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave under rule 61 to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity. If granted, I would move:

That the Assembly call on the government to immediately introduce mandatory minimum penalties for organizing demonstrations contrary to the COVID-19 public health orders.

The Speaker: — Will the member briefly state the purpose of the motion and read the text.

An Hon. Member: — She did.

The Speaker: — You did? Okay. The member for Regina Douglas Park has requested leave to move without notice a motion of urgent and pressing necessity under rule 61. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Leave has not been granted. Next item of business. I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. The House now stands adjourned till 1:30 tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 14:21.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Scott Moe
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
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister of Trade and Export Development
Minister of Immigration and Career Training
Minister Responsible for Innovation
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan

Hon. Everett Hindley
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,
Seniors and Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Warren Kaeding
Minister of Environment

Hon. Gene Makowsky
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Hon. David Marit
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Hon. Don McMorris
Minister of Government Relations
Minister Responsible for First Nations,
Métis and Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for the
Provincial Capital Commission

Hon. Paul Merriman
Minister of Health

Hon. Don Morgan
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister of Crown Investments Corporation
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Power Corporation
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Telecommunications
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Water Corporation
Minister Responsible for the
Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board

Hon. Jim Reiter
Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor
and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority

Hon. Laura Ross
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

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

Hon. Gordon Wyant
Minister of Justice and Attorney General