



SECOND 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
2nd 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

Beck, Carla — Regina Lakeview (NDP)	Love, Matt — Saskatoon Eastview (NDP)
Bonk, Steven — Moosomin (SP)	Makowsky, Hon. Gene — Regina Gardiner Park (SP)
Bowes, Jennifer — Saskatoon University (NDP)	Marit, Hon. David — Wood River (SP)
Bradshaw, Hon. Fred — Carrot River Valley (SP)	McLeod, Tim — Moose Jaw North (SP)
Buckingham, David — Saskatoon Westview (SP)	McMorris, Hon. Don — Indian Head-Milestone (SP)
Carr, Hon. Lori — Estevan (SP)	Meili, Ryan — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)
Cheveldayoff, Ken — Saskatoon Willowgrove (SP)	Merriman, Hon. Paul — Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland (SP)
Cockrill, Jeremy — The Battlefords (SP)	Meyers, Derek — Regina Walsh Acres (SP)
Conway, Meara — Regina Elphinstone-Centre (NDP)	Moe, Hon. Scott — Rosthern-Shellbrook (SP)
Dennis, Terry — Canora-Pelly (SP)	Morgan, Hon. Don — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)
Docherty, Mark — Regina Coronation Park (SP)	Mowat, Vicki — Saskatoon Fairview (NDP)
Domotor, Ryan — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)	Nerlien, Hugh — Kelvington-Wadena (SP)
Duncan, Hon. Dustin — Weyburn-Big Muddy (SP)	Nippi-Albright, Betty — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)
Eyre, Hon. Bronwyn — Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota (SP)	Ottenbreit, Greg — Yorkton (SP)
Fiaz, Muhammad — Regina Pasqua (SP)	Reiter, Hon. Jim — Rosetown-Elrose (SP)
Francis, Ken — Kindersley (SP)	Ritchie, Erika — Saskatoon Nutana (NDP)
Friesen, Marv — Saskatoon Riversdale (SP)	Ross, Alana — Prince Albert Northcote (SP)
Goudy, Todd — Melfort (SP)	Ross, Hon. Laura — Regina Rochdale (SP)
Grewal, Gary — Regina Northeast (SP)	Sarauer, Nicole — Regina Douglas Park (NDP)
Hargrave, Joe — Prince Albert Carlton (SP)	Skoropad, Dana — Arm River (SP)
Harpauer, Hon. Donna — Humboldt-Watrous (SP)	Steele, Doug — Cypress Hills (SP)
Harrison, Daryl — Cannington (SP)	Stewart, Hon. Lyle — Lumsden-Morse (SP)
Harrison, Hon. Jeremy — Meadow Lake (SP)	Tell, Hon. Christine — Regina Wascana Plains (SP)
Hindley, Hon. Everett — Swift Current (SP)	Vermette, Doyle — Cumberland (NDP)
Jenson, Terry — Martensville-Warman (SP)	Weekes, Hon. Randy — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)
Kaeding, Hon. Warren — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)	Wilson, Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (Ind.)
Keisig, Travis — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)	Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)
Kirsch, Delbert — Batoche (SP)	Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
Lambert, Lisa — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)	Young, Aleana — Regina University (NDP)
Lawrence, Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)	Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)
Lemaigre, Jim — Athabasca (SP)	

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 48; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 12; Independent (Ind.) — 1

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Gregory A. Putz

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

Deputy Clerk — Iris Lang

Clerk Assistant — Kathy Burianyk

Sergeant-at-Arms — Sean Darling

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

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

Ms. A. Young: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to request leave to make a statement concerning the question of privilege before the Assembly.

The Speaker: — Leave has been requested. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. Please state your statement.

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

Apology

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regards to the question before the Assembly, I would like to apologize and withdraw.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Mr. Friesen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In our gallery is a long-time friend of mine — we were talking about it earlier; got a little brief tour of the building — Bill Bentley. And Bill runs several businesses in our province and he's down for SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association]. So very happy to have you here, Bill, and just a brief introduction. So welcome to your Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Steele: — Mr. Speaker, an introduction. To you and through you I'd like to introduce a group of community leaders from the Southwest from a number of different communities. I'll start off with the town of Gull Lake. We have a councillor, Dennis Kirk. Give us a wave there, Dennis. And also we have the administrator, Dawnette Peterson, and Mr. Bentley Gibson. Bentley is a 40-year chief of the fire department in the Southwest.

Also from the town of Maple Creek, Tina Cresswell, Cara Teichroeb, Gavin Graves, Kerrie Chabot, thank you so much. And from the town of Shaunavon, Riley Kornfeld, Mike Greenlay. From the village of Webb, Raylene Packet. And somebody that frequents the legislature quite often, the mayor of Fox Valley, what's ... oh yeah, Sean Checkley. Welcome to your legislature.

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

Mr. Jensen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you this afternoon, I'd like to welcome to the Assembly for the

very first time a good friend of mine, Doug Ramage. He's seated in the second row. Doug was elected as a councillor in the city of Warman in 2020 for his first term. He's also a professional engineer that specializes in municipal infrastructure, and he's also Chair of the planning and development committee for the city of Warman. I also want to give a shout-out, even though he's not here today, to his — I think he's a 7-year-old — 7-year-old son, Cub.

So with that, I would encourage all members of this Assembly to welcome Doug to the Saskatchewan legislature.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the members opposite in welcoming this delegation of elected leaders and administrators to their Assembly. I've had the opportunity and look forward to more opportunity over the next couple of days of meeting with this group as they convene here in Regina for their first in-person convention in two years. I know, Mr. Speaker, some elected leaders, this is the first in-person convention that they've been able to attend.

And it's just great to see everyone here in person. Thank you for your service to your communities. On behalf of the official opposition, thank you, and I invite all members to join me in welcoming and thanking these local leaders.

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

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, through you, to you, to all members of this Assembly, I would like to ask a welcome to my son Arsalan Fiaz, sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, he is a very intelligent boy in our family and the smartest kid. He's a good squash player, very regular in the squash, Mr. Speaker. Yes, he beat me many times. Mr. Speaker, it's very important to tell that he's so proud of the faith he belongs to. He's so proud of the culture he belongs to. He's so proud that his mom wears a hijab. And he is going to spend the day with me today. Mr. Speaker, I ask all the members to welcome him.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to join with the member opposite and recognize Doug Ramage, a former neighbour in the Riversdale neighbourhood. Good to see you here, Doug. And I ask members to join me in welcoming him to his legislature. Good to see you, Doug.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Honoured to rise in the Assembly once again and present a petition to the Legislative Assembly calling for home supports for older adults in Saskatchewan. The thing that I want to highlight today is that this is an initiative that has been started by many different stakeholders in the province. Folks are out there advocating for

better care, especially as we emerge from the pandemic, to envision what type of province we want for each of us to age in, to grow old in a way that allows us, each of us, to reach our potential.

One of things that the petitioners want to bring to our attention is that providing home supports for older adults comes at a significantly lower cost, and that these are cost-effective measures to provide care and support to seniors to age in their own homes in their own communities where they can reach their potential.

I will read the prayer, 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 work with older adults, stakeholders, and municipalities to design a home supports program that will allow seniors to age with dignity and autonomy in their homes and communities.

The petitioners reside in Edam, Saskatchewan, and I do so present.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling on the Sask Party government to end the chronic underfunding of our classrooms.

Those who have signed this petition wish to draw our attention to a number of points: first, that the 2021-22 provincial budget's failure to fully fund the teachers' contract amounts to a cut, Mr. Speaker, something that we saw repeated in this year's budget; that the Sask Party government's cuts mean falling per-student funding and fewer supports for students as they recover from the impacts of the pandemic, Mr. Speaker; and that the Sask Party's failure to invest in our classrooms is having serious consequences today, Mr. Speaker.

Just last week, we heard news of cuts of 20 teachers in the Southwest of our province in the Chinook School Division, and that is directly due to underfunding by this government.

Mr. Speaker, I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call upon the Sask Party government to immediately fix the crisis in our classrooms by providing stable and adequate funding for public education in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, those who have signed the petition today reside in Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — miigwech, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present this petition calling on the government to designate the west lawn as the Chief Piapot Cultural Learning Grounds. The west lawn has become a de facto site for Indigenous expression

due to its proximity to the Legislative Assembly, and officially designating this site would facilitate the ongoing process of reconciliation.

I will read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly call upon the government to recognize the west lawn of the legislative grounds as the Chief Piapot Cultural Learning Grounds, a designated site for cultural celebration, education, Indigenous ceremony, and peaceful demonstration.

The signatures of this petition reside in Saskatoon, Onion Lake, and Cut Knife. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association Convention

Mr. Grewal: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the first time in more than two years, representatives from Saskatchewan cities, towns, villages, resort villages, and northern municipalities are gathering in person. Mr. Speaker, SUMA got started with the Premier's address this morning at the Queensbury Convention Centre right here in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association has brought members together for an annual convention since 1906. One thousand delegates from across Saskatchewan are expected to raise and discuss important topics in their communities. SUMA is an opportunity to connect and network with peers, decision makers, and exhibitors.

The theme of this year's convention is Connect, which I believe is appropriately named after we have spent so much time apart due to COVID-19. This year's keynote speaker will be former Edmonton mayor Don Iveson. The week will also include the Saskatchewan Municipal Awards, the President's address, and a much-anticipated bear-pit session with members of provincial cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, we all look forward to connecting with local leaders to help build a stronger Saskatchewan. I ask all members to please join me in welcoming everyone to Regina for what promises to be another exciting and engaging SUMA convention. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Holy Month of Ramadan Begins

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to celebrate the beginning of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar and the holy month of fasting. Ramadan began on April 2nd and will conclude on May 1st of this year.

My constituency of Saskatoon Fairview is home to many families of Muslim faith who greatly enrich our community. I look

forward to connecting with them over the course of Ramadan and, as in years past, I look forward to learning more about the practices and celebrations of Ramadan.

The Muslim community in Saskatoon celebrates the end of Ramadan with Eid, one of the most important celebrations that Muslims have in a year. In the past, thousands of people have joined in prayer and celebration together.

Saskatchewan is truly blessed to have such a vibrant and committed Muslim community, with leaders that come from every facet of our province. I would like to extend my sincere wishes for a happy and peaceful Ramadan to all those observing this holy month. May this Ramadan bring joy, health, and wealth to all. Ramadan mubarak.

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

Huskies Men's Basketball Team Wins Silver at National Championship

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the first time in 13 years, the University of Saskatchewan Huskies men's basketball team advanced to the U Sports championship. Mr. Speaker, this was the Huskies' first trip to the final since winning the program's only national title in 2010. After a close game against the Carleton Ravens in the final, the Huskies were rewarded with the silver medal this past weekend in Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, on their way to the final, the Huskies faced challenges that made their championship bid more uncertain. An abrupt coaching change less than a month prior to the championship shook things up for the Huskies. But of course, Mr. Speaker, it's not how you start but how you finish that matters.

The Huskies knocked out the number one team in the nation en route to the title game after being seeded eighth in the eight-team tournament. Mr. Speaker, you can never really count the underdog out completely.

I now ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in congratulating our University of Saskatchewan Huskies on their performance in this year's U Sports tournament. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[13:45]

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

Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize April as Genocide Remembrance, Condemnation and Prevention Month, which was designated by the House of Commons in 2015. During this month we honour the memory of the victims of genocide and reflect on the root causes of these tragedies so that they never happen again.

There are many historic examples of genocide, resulting in

incredible loss, not only of human life but of culture, Mr. Speaker. The effects are felt through generations. Here in Canada, James Daschuk argues the policies that displaced Indigenous communities from the Plains were part of a process of genocide. The term was also used in the reports of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls inquiry. Genocide often begins as dehumanizing groups of people, making it crucial to fight hate and discrimination in any form at any level.

The atrocities unfolding in front of our collective eye in Ukraine is a stark reminder of the fragility of peace, Mr. Speaker. We must stand as Saskatchewan people together, united in the fight for human rights and dignity of all people. We must also work to end violence and conflict around the world — in Ukraine, Iraq, Afghanistan, in occupied Palestine, Yemen, South Sudan, and elsewhere.

Unfortunately, Saskatchewan's not immune to hate and has seen a rise of reported hate crimes. This is an unacceptable trend and we must all work to address it, Mr. Speaker. With that, I would ask all members to remember the lives and cultures lost due to genocide, and commit to using every tool available to combat hate in our own backyard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Programs to Support Métis Women in Business

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Clarence Campeau Development Fund recently announced an initiative to support female Métis entrepreneurs and break down some of the barriers they face in starting a business. Audra Hill, a Métis entrepreneur and owner of Farmer John's Local Market & Kitchen in Emerald Park, is one of the beneficiaries.

Mr. Speaker, being a successful entrepreneur is no easy task, but through programs like CCDF [Clarence Campeau Development Fund] and the Indigenous women entrepreneurship program, historically disadvantaged groups are accessing capital resources and opportunities. The CCDF portfolio is 36 per cent Métis women. There are hopes that the program will grow that ratio to 50 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the elimination of systemic barriers to entrepreneurship is a win for everyone in Saskatchewan. Victoria Gagné, a specialist with the CCDF, had this to say: "We want to make sure they're getting the same interest rates, the same opportunity, and access to the same organizations as any other entrepreneur."

Métis women bring unique perspectives and ideas to the business world, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud that this government sees the value of Saskatchewan's business community, especially young entrepreneurs. Although Audra opened her store only a month ago, I look forward to seeing it grow and develop alongside many other successful Saskatchewan businesses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Expansion of Family Intervention Rapid Support Team Initiative

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In July of 2021 our government introduced the family intervention rapid support team, or FIRST initiative. This initiative connects families in crisis with immediate help and aims to disrupt the cycle of violence by bringing services to families. Trained outreach workers are in place to intervene and provide services to families in crisis and to provide ongoing support to reduce the risk of future violence. By intervening earlier, this program aims to lower the likelihood of family violence and reduce demand for emergency services.

The FIRST program has been delivered by West Central Crisis & Family Support Centre, based in Kindersley, and serves families across central west Saskatchewan. However, Mr. Speaker, in February of this year, our government expanded this initiative to offer supports in Moose Jaw, Estevan, Weyburn, Carlyle, and Nipawin areas. The outreach program will be delivered by several community-based organizations including the Moose Jaw Transition House.

Mr. Speaker, the expansion of this program will not only support our communities' at-risk families, but will also help build a safer Saskatchewan. Thank you to all those individuals and community organizations that are helping deliver this program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Construction Begins on New Urgent Care Centre in Regina

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am very excited to rise in the House today and announce that work is under way on Regina's new \$15 million acute care centre. The facility will be designed to offer residents an alternative to emergency departments for illnesses and injuries that are not life threatening. This means timely access for issues that require immediate attention including injury care, basic diagnostics like ultrasounds and X-rays, as well as mental health and addiction supports. Mr. Speaker, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, this centre will be available for the citizens of Regina to access appropriate care.

Construction is set to start this spring and should be completed early next year. The facility will be owned and operated by the Saskatchewan Health Authority. Planning has also begun for staffing with a multidisciplinary care team to make sure patients get the right care.

Mr. Speaker, this is part of this government's \$7.5 billion capital plan to stimulate economic recovery in the province. Seeing a project like this come up and start work so quickly shows that Saskatchewan is back on track. Mr. Speaker, residents can expect construction at 1350 Albert Street within the next few months. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Affordability and Cost of Living

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start by reading something, Mr. Speaker. I quote:

The two-year pandemic has clearly placed considerable financial stress on families and businesses, despite the unprecedented supports provided by the federal and provincial governments to date. More recently, inflation levels not seen in decades have significantly increased the cost of food and transportation and other essential goods. Canadians were already feeling the pain of supply chain and other inflationary causes.

We now need to provide obvious pricing relief to families and businesses being squeezed by all of these combined forces.

I agree with these sentiments, Mr. Speaker, but they aren't my words. The Premier may recognize them from a letter that he sent to the Prime Minister. He sent that letter a week before that same Premier raised 32 taxes and fees on working families in Saskatchewan.

So to the Premier: how do you look the people of Saskatchewan in the eye and claim you truly care about making life more affordable when you say one thing but do another?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, this government has been focused on affordability for Saskatchewan residents and Saskatchewan families each and every year since we've had the honour to form government in 2007. Over the course of the past couple of weeks, we've heard the Deputy Premier read into the record a number of initiatives that are in place and annualized each and every year, initiatives that are reducing income tax, in particular reducing and eliminating income tax on those low-income families in the province, Mr. Speaker.

There are personal and child, spousal exemptions that are available to further reduce that. We see the Minister of Education working alongside our federal government with a child care plan, Mr. Speaker, freeing up . . . with the intent to free up 28,000 spaces here in the province and moving the cost of that child care down to \$10 a day. We've increased the seniors' income plan now four times, Mr. Speaker, never increased under the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, affordability for Saskatchewan people is something that is paramount, not just when the gas price increases such as it has this year, but it's paramount year in, year out. All told, about \$2 billion in affordability measures are put forward each and every year by this government, and the beneficiary, Mr. Speaker, are the people that happen to live in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, decisions made a decade ago are cold comfort to families who are struggling to pay the bills today. Again from that same letter: "Your government and ours are putting measures in place to address deep affordability concerns

in these challenging times, to help all of the people, families, and businesses we jointly serve.” “Putting measures in place,” that suggests something happening now. But it isn’t, which is pretty disingenuous, I think.

In Manitoba, we see a different story. Their Finance minister says affordability will be the cornerstone of their upcoming budget. In Alberta, their government has frozen the provincial sales tax on gasoline to help folks at the pumps. Jason Kenney may not be able to fill his own tank, but he’s making sure Albertans get a break to fill theirs. We’re hearing today that Ontario may see some relief as well.

But here in Saskatchewan, all the Premier has to offer people are empty words and higher taxes. Mr. Speaker, how can this government in the same breath decry the affordability crisis to the federal government and do nothing but turn around and increase taxes on Saskatchewan people?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, to some degree — partially, which is better than normal — the Leader of the Opposition is correct with some of the preamble to his question. There are a number of initiatives that have been put in place, yes, a decade ago, that are improving the affordability yet today for Saskatchewan people because they are annualized. They happen each and every year, and Saskatchewan families benefit from them each and every year, even up to and including this year, Mr. Speaker.

And then they are added to. And here’s the rest of the story, Paul Harvey, rest of the story, Mr. Speaker. They are added to in this year’s budget. Seniors’ income plan, increased yet again in this budget. Mr. Speaker, we’ve seen across Canada, a number of governments look at, you know, how can they get money back into families, family households. We’ve seen that in various ways.

We see it today, Mr. Speaker. We saw in BC [British Columbia] under an NDP [New Democratic Party] government, \$110 was returned through their auto fund in British Columbia, their insurance provider. We’ve seen over the last six months about \$285 originally, and then another \$100 more recently, returned to Saskatchewan people.

So yes, there are incentives, Mr. Speaker, and initiatives that have been put in place years ago. They happen each and every year. Saskatchewan families benefit from them each and every year. And they’re added to in this most recent budget.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People are facing added costs but there is no added help, and instead, there’s added taxes and added fees. Mr. Speaker, right now, this week, Alberta drivers are seeing relief at the pumps, but here in Saskatchewan, not only is the Sask Party not providing any affordability measures for residents, they wouldn’t even allow an emergency debate to discuss removing that fuel tax or providing a rebate. They wouldn’t even talk about it.

Had the Premier voted on the debate, would he have made that

same decision and refused to even discuss a plan? Or will he listen to the people of Saskatchewan and provide some relief on provincial sales taxes right now?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, the fact is, and this is what is confusing . . . in particular now where you see, you know, the marriage of our Prime Minister and the Liberal Party and the NDP Party to run this country and to cling to power for the next number of years, Mr. Speaker.

But as you look across Western Canada, you see, Mr. Speaker, the NDP in Alberta that are dead set against, dead set against the UCP’s [United Conservative Party] move to reduce the fuel tax there. You see the NDP in British Columbia doing, to a lesser extent, exactly what we did in Saskatchewan, was returning Saskatchewan folks’ dollars back into those family households, Mr. Speaker. To a lesser degree, but they did move down the road the same.

The fact of the matter here, Mr. Speaker, is in this province we have a number of affordability measures that are annualized each and every year. And the result of that is this: we have among the lowest income tax rates in the nation. The result of these initiatives, Mr. Speaker, is we have one of the lowest-cost utility bundles for families across the nation of Canada. You add to that other initiatives like the seniors’ income plan, and we can go on and on up to about \$2 billion each and every year.

It’s this government, Mr. Speaker, that will continue to stand up for the families across this province and continue to put forward initiatives that make life more affordable not just when the price of gas goes up a few cents.

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

Mr. Meili: — A few cents, Mr. Speaker. A few cents. People are paying \$1.70 a litre. People are breaking the bank to fill the tank, Mr. Speaker. And these are hard times. These annualized measures, that’s all fine and good, but every year more people are in poverty. And right now more people are struggling than ever.

And despite this government saying oh, they consulted everyone, the arts industry, the sports and culture industry were blindsided by this government’s decision to expand the PST [provincial sales tax], Mr. Speaker. People are paying more for rock shows, for Rider games, for curling, for hunting, for fishing, at a time when life is more expensive than ever. They’re paying more at a time when we want people to come together, Mr. Speaker.

[14:00]

This Premier says he understands affordability, but he could not be more out of touch with the reality that people are facing in our communities today, Mr. Speaker. If he won’t give us any relief, will he at least abandon the 32 added taxes and fees that he just slapped on to Saskatchewan families?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, when a number of these

affordability measures have been introduced over the course of . . . I'll just go back the last number of months. We see the questions here today, but in fact when these measures are put in place, they're met with quite violent opposition from individuals across the way, Mr. Speaker.

For example, when we campaigned on and delivered on a 10 per cent rebate to our SaskPower bills in this province for a year, the member from Regina University had this to say: "It was just a handout, and it didn't seem like good public policy." Mr. Speaker, that's a quote directly from the Regina University MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly].

Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Nutana was opposed to the SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] rebate. It was okay in the case of NDP BC but opposed here in Saskatchewan, to Saskatchewan people receiving that rebate. The member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre called these tax credits, she called them loopholes, Mr. Speaker, not benefits to Saskatchewan folks and Saskatchewan families, but loopholes.

Mr. Speaker, the track record of this government is one that it reduces taxes on Saskatchewan families to the tune of about \$2 billion each and every year, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to continue to stand up for the families across this province.

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

Provision of Health Care in Rural Communities

Ms. Beck: — A lot of bluster, Mr. Speaker, but not a lot of reality in that answer. After nearly a decade of hearing cries from the front lines in health care, the Sask Party is finally starting to wake up to the health care staffing crisis of their own making. Communities across this province have been dealing with chronic disruptions to care in their hometowns.

For years this government has failed to retain doctors, and there aren't enough health care workers to run these hospitals. There are promises, Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget, but when will this government actually deliver and end the closures in the hospitals in smaller communities?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And pretty rich coming from a party that closed 176 rural facilities, Mr. Speaker, pretty rich.

Mr. Speaker, obviously we had a chance last week to vote on what was in the budget. The opposition decided not to support what we are doing in our recruitment. The Minister of Advanced Education has 150 nursing seats. Mr. Speaker, we have capital investments. We have operating investments, surgical capacities. We're recruiting around the world, across Canada. But we're also doing that to fill in the short-term gap but also the long term that we need. We're recruiting CCAs [continuing care aide]. We're recruiting doctors, nurses of all designations.

But what I am pleased to report, Mr. Speaker, is, can you imagine the issue that we would be in if we were 4,300 nurses short, which is what we've grown since 2007? Since we've had the privilege

of forming government, almost 1,000 more doctors that we have in our province, Mr. Speaker. That certainly would have never happened under the members opposite.

They have the continual record, and everybody in this province and certainly rural Saskatchewan knows. They've closed down facilities. We're working on keeping them open. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, the minister is mixing up his own tired talking points. But make no mistake: these are Sask Party closures cutting deeper and deeper into rural Saskatchewan. And they are dangerous and potentially deadly.

Over the weekend, Mr. Speaker, and into today, the hospital in Esterhazy was closed to emergencies. On any given day, there are hundreds of workers at three nearby potash mines, hundreds of workers at industrial sites who would have to travel, Mr. Speaker, over an hour if they ever needed emergency care. Does the minister actually think that this is acceptable, and what's his plan to ensure these workers and this community have access to emergency care when they need it?

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

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the plan is some of the investments that were made in the budget here for '22-23, such as expanding the distributed medical education program, more residency training seats, specialist residency training seats, nine more seats in the SIPPA [Saskatchewan international physician practice assessment] program, enhancements to the rural physician incentive program, the creation of the new health human resources agency to help focus our efforts amongst a number of ministries to bring health care professionals of all designations to address some of the challenges we face around the province in places like Esterhazy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what we won't do is what the members opposite have talked about and the things that they support. In her budget reply, the member for Saskatoon University referenced comments made by academic Steven Lewis in the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] while calling on the government to listen to the experts. The expert believes that — and this is a quote, ". . . retention would improve . . . if the rural health-care system was redesigned to have care be consolidated to a few centres." Mr. Speaker, that's what the members opposite stand for. The government does not.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, people are not looking for empty promises and political attacks. They need a fix today. Mr. Speaker, municipal leaders from across the province are meeting this week at the SUMA convention. Leaders from Swift Current know that last week there was nowhere in all of the Southwest for an expectant mother to go for an emergency delivery. Leaders from Kamsack, Canora, Herbert, Broadview, Biggar, Porcupine Plain, Preeceville, Broadview, Wilkie, Lanigan, Esterhazy, they

all know that right now local emergency services are unavailable in their communities.

Two full years after these hospitals were closed, they're still shuttered with no plans to reopen. Does the minister believe that urgent access to health care should depend on a person's postal code, or does he agree that people of Saskatchewan deserve better?

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

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We acknowledge that we have a number of temporary service disruptions in the province. Now they might want to speak to, for example, the folks in the community of Redvers where they recently resumed full services there, restored services 24-7 in the community of Redvers, Mr. Speaker.

For example, in Kamsack as an example here, a recent letter to the editor from the new doctor there speaks about his praise for the community and leading a good life there. The new doctor in Kamsack, Mr. Speaker, says that, and I quote, "Everything has been excellent so far for me here. Of course there's some challenges but they're a part of life and an opportunity for learning and personal growth." He's grateful to the Kamsack community for accepting and embracing him.

Mr. Speaker, and we're going to continue to work to address these challenges. We have faith in rural Saskatchewan unlike the members opposite who . . . Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from a *StarPhoenix* article in 2006: "The suspension of hospital services in rural Saskatchewan is a fact of life," Health minister Len Taylor said. That's again how they feel about health care in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

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

Funding for Education

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, the ministers opposite want to quote things from 2006. I've got a quote from last Thursday. Okay, on Thursday, Chinook School Division sent a letter to families sharing more bad news. And contrary to that minister's claims about this year's budget, the letter says from Chinook schools, and I quote, "Funding did not cover projected teachers' salary increase, other support staff salary increases, or any other inflationary costs for the upcoming year."

I'll remind the Assembly that this province lost 352 teachers last year, in-school educators. This year Chinook is talking about losing 20 teachers. They're also talking about cutting EA [educational assistant] hours at a time when kids need more support to get back on track. Does the minister agree that coming out of the pandemic, kids should have more support, not less?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would say that overall this budget is going to provide additional support to students right across this province — \$1.99 billion in operating funding as well as a \$7 million new fund to provide for

200 full-time EAs across the province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I know that school divisions and their CFOs [chief financial officer] have only had their numbers for a week. And they get the next number of months to present a budget to the ministry, and so that those school boards will have some time now to get a better understanding of what the funding will mean for their school divisions and make decisions and forward a budget accordingly, Mr. Speaker.

So as I said before, I look forward to working with school divisions as they finalize their budget over the next three months. Thank you.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, that minister doesn't have his facts straight, and I will look at the words he put on the record. He claimed inflationary pressures' impacts on divisions are "relatively minor."

That's wrong, Mr. Speaker. Like families, divisions are being squeezed on all sides by the affordability crisis. Chinook School Division school buses cover 149 rural routes. They travel 3.8 million kilometres every year. Does the minister honestly think that these cost pressures don't have an impact on a school division's bottom line?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the member has probably heard me say this before, but in terms of pressures on school operating funding, Mr. Speaker, the largest proportion of those are both the teachers' CBA [collective bargaining agreement], which is fully funded in this budget, as well as enrolment growth which . . . Since 2007, 41 per cent has been the increase in the operating grant, and that is greater than the combined 30 per cent of the teacher's CBA over that time and enrolment growth of 10 per cent. I would note that Chinook has indicated to the ministry they expect fewer students this year, and yet they're going to get an increased budget through this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of inflationary pressures when it relates to transportation and fuel, it is a relatively small portion of their budget.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, that minister's response shows that he knows. He knows that school divisions have faced years of austerity budgets that have left them with no choice but to reduce staffing. And that this budget this year is no different. In the words of the member of Moose Jaw North, who presided over deep cuts in Prairie South School Division in 2020, he said: "I believe we're applying a band-aid where surgery is required."

Mr. Speaker, the Education minister won't listen to the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association]. He won't listen to the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation]. He won't listen to teachers. He won't listen to individual divisions having to

make hard choices to cut staff. And he won't even listen to his own backbencher who identified a broken system in need of surgery.

Will this minister start listening and commit to adequate funding, so divisions can avoid cuts that will derail a pandemic recovery for our kids?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well I'm not going to take any lessons from that member opposite who quoted the member from Moose Jaw and completely took the quote out of context in which the member from Moose Jaw voted against his own school board's budget. Because he believed, Mr. Speaker, he believed that the administration and the board needed to do more work in using the adequate funding that they received from the province. So that member better check his quotes next time he's quoting any member on this side of the House, which I think goes for most of those members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to be working with school boards over the next number of months to ensure that the supports are there for students, the supports are there for staff in utilizing the largest education budget in the history of the province of Saskatchewan.

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

Cybersecurity and Transparency

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, we recently learned that this government yet again has fallen to another cyberattack. This time it's SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority], which happened three months ago, Mr. Speaker. And three months later is when folks are finally realizing what had happened, many affected only learning that their information was breached after the hackers alerted the media of this government's failure.

Mr. Speaker, one supplier said, "I'm pretty livid. I'm disappointed in the lack of transparency. I feel like they were not totally upfront about the severity of the breach."

Mr. Speaker, this is a pattern with this government who continually fails to manage its own cybersecurity — eHealth in 2020, hunting and licensing system in 2021, and now here a hack at SLGA. What exact steps will be taken to protect Saskatchewan people from these ongoing hacks and data breaches?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, it was at Christmastime that SLGA recognized that they were being hacked. On December 28th a news release by the government was released. Nothing was hidden. Employees who could potentially be at risk of identity theft — both current and former employees — have been notified. They've been notified that credit monitoring is available for them, Mr. Speaker.

[14:15]

And as far as the suppliers, Mr. Speaker . . . And I should also

mention, the SLGA officials inform me they've worked very closely with the Privacy Commissioner's office through all this, including on whether it be direct or indirect communication and notification of potential leaks.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on. The fact of the matter is, nothing was hidden here. It was open, transparent as much as possible. We'll continue to work with suppliers to inform them of any possible security risks they may face. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Suicide Prevention Strategy

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, this is the fourth day this spring I rise on behalf of Saskatchewan families who have lost a loved one to suicide. When will we see a real plan that saves Saskatchewan lives?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this year's budget, the 2022-23 budget, there is funding provided for two and a quarter million dollars for suicide prevention initiatives. I've mentioned some of these in the past, Mr. Speaker, whether it's the Pillars for Life or Roots of Hope initiative. The Roots of Hope, suicide prevention initiatives that are currently operating in La Ronge, Meadow Lake, and Buffalo Narrows.

As an example, Mr. Speaker, there is some additional funding towards a province-wide medication take-back initiative, further public awareness campaigns that we have initiated in this budget year and also in the previous budget year.

This is a significant priority for our province, for communities across Saskatchewan — rural communities, urban communities, northern and remote and First Nations communities as well. And we're committed to working with our community partners to try to address this as quickly and as best we can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 79 — *The Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation Act*

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 79, the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Trade and Export Development that Bill No. 79 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Next sitting.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Membership of the Board of Internal Economy

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, pursuant to section 67 of *The Legislative Assembly Act*, 2017, I hereby inform the Assembly of the membership of the Board of Internal Economy, effective March 30th, 2022: Hon. Randy Weekes, Chair, Speaker; Hon. Jeremy Harrison, executive council nominee; Hon. Everett Hindley, executive council nominee; Terry Dennis, MLA, government caucus nominee; Alana Ross, MLA, government caucus nominee; Matt Love, MLA, opposition caucus nominee; Vicki Mowat, MLA, opposition caucus nominee.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Question of Privilege

The Speaker: — On the morning of March 31st, 2022, the Government House Leader raised a question of privilege. I deferred my ruling so that I could carefully review all matters associated with the case. I'm now prepared to make my ruling.

The remedy requested for the question of privilege was for the member to apologize. The member has done so. Therefore as there is no dispute as to the facts, and as the remedy has already been applied, I consider the matter closed.

However I would like to take a moment to call the Assembly's attention to a practice that has begun with respect to questions of privilege. Rule 12 of *The Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan* provides that a question of privilege is raised by providing the Speaker with a letter outlining the details of the case, among other things. The Speaker must then decide whether the case is *prima facie* on the merit of the evidence presented in that letter.

The rules provide for the privilege letter to be distributed accordingly to the House leaders and independent members; however, no mechanism exists for the Speaker to accept or consider alternate arguments put forward by members in subsequent letters or other forms of communication. Subsequently, the Speaker will not take any additional communications into consideration when rendering a decision on the matter. If members feel their arguments have merit, they should use them to debate the matter of privilege if it proceeds in the Assembly. If members wish to follow a process whereby matters of privilege are argued through correspondence to the Speaker prior to being presented in the House, members should bring this matter to the Standing Committee on House Services.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 78 — *The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Amendment Act, 2022*

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

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move the second reading of *The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Amendment Act, 2022*. The purpose of this legislation is to preserve Saskatchewan's right to take legal action against opioid manufacturers and distributors and hold them accountable for their role in the ongoing addiction and overdose crisis across the country.

Mr. Speaker, 2021 saw the highest number of opioid-related harms on record in Saskatchewan, a situation similar to what is happening across the country. Our government has had to make unprecedented financial commitments to mental health and addictions services to address this. \$470 million is being dedicated to these services in the '22-23 budget year alone.

It is the position of our government that opioid manufacturers and distributors have a responsibility to compensate provinces for this. They have used deceptive marketing practices and worked to conceal the potential risks of opioid use. Many people have suffered from serious addiction issues as a result.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of British Columbia is leading a class action lawsuit on behalf of all federal, provincial, and territorial governments, claiming manufacturers and distributors of opioid products deceived prescribers and patients about the risks and benefits of opioids. The Government of Saskatchewan fully supports the lawsuit. The purpose of this lawsuit is to recover health care costs expended in treating opioid-related disease and injuries, as well as social costs related to opioid addiction.

Most other provinces, including Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador, are also participating and enacting appropriate legislation. Mr. Speaker, while we have every confidence in the outcome of the legal proceeding, it will take time and our window of opportunity is closing.

The legislation we are discussing today will keep that window of opportunity open. *The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Amendment Act, 2022* will preserve Saskatchewan's right to take legal action and continue to participate in the British Columbia lawsuits well into the next decade. This legislation also broadens the parameters of liability to potentially include individual corporate executives, their marketing advisors, and key participants in the decisions that caused serious harm to opioid patients, their families, and the public health care system.

Ensuring proper responsibility and accountability for actions taken by the opioid industry will help to ensure a safer and healthier Saskatchewan. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I am now

pleased to move the second reading of *The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Amendment Act, 2022*.

The Speaker: — It has been moved that Bill 78, *The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Amendment Act, 2022* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank the minister opposite for having open communication throughout this process and giving us a heads-up that this was coming forward. And we have had a chance already to ask some of the questions that we have about this particular piece of legislation. It certainly seems prudent to ensure that we're on the same page as other provinces on this front and to make sure that there are no constraints on what the minister called the window of opportunity, which sounds like better jargon than the legal jargon that I've been following on this particular bill.

It's certainly important for us to be able to seek damages. That is one piece to this equation. Another piece to it is what we do with that funding when we obtain it. So you know, I'll offer up that that money should be spent on harm reduction, on mental health and addictions treatment, but also on prevention and addressing the root causes that lead to addiction in the first place, Mr. Speaker. So I will, I think, conclude my remarks there and allow this legislation to move on to its next steps.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the minister that Bill 78, *The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, 2022* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Second reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this bill be committed? I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — I designate that Bill No. 78 be committed to the Committee of the Whole on Bills and the said bill be considered immediately.

The Speaker: — This bill is committed to the Committee of the Whole on Bills.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Committee of the Whole on Bills.

The Speaker: — I do now leave the Chair for the Assembly to go to Committee of the Whole on Bills.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON BILLS

Bill No. 78 — *The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Amendment Act, 2022*

The Chair: — The item of business before the committee is Bill No. 78, *The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery*

Amendment Act, 2022. Clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clauses 1 to 8 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: Bill No. 78, *The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Amendment Act, 2022*.

I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you. I move that the committee report the bill without amendment.

The Chair: — It has been moved that the committee report Bill No. 78, *The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Amendment Act, 2022* without amendment. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[14:30]

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of Committees.

Mr. Hargrave: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the committee to report Bill No. 78, *The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Amendment Act, 2022* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be read the third time? I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to move third reading for Bill No. 78, *The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Amendment Act, 2022* immediately.

The Speaker: — The member has requested leave to move third reading of Bill No. 78 immediately. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 78 — *The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Amendment Act, 2022*

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — I move that Bill No. 78 be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved that Bill No. 78, *The Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Amendment Act, 2022* 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.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Third reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the committee sit again? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Next sitting.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 70

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Tell that **Bill No. 70 — *The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, 2021/Loi modificative de 2021 sur l'Assemblée législative*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is certainly a privilege to rise in my place to join in debate on the infamous Bill 70. This bill is a real low blow, even for this government, Mr. Speaker. And as the Leader of the Opposition said during his remarks, we on this side, we really didn't think that we would be here, Mr. Speaker, debating something so fundamental.

I think the Leader of the Opposition said it's as if we're debating the wood on the walls or the marble on the floor. It really feels that way, Mr. Speaker. It's as if we're debating sort of the heart of why it is we do this work, Mr. Speaker, because this bill really strikes to the core of that, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to limit my comments to really two areas, because my colleagues have spoken so eloquently and indeed quite at length, sometimes a little longer than even they anticipated, Mr. Speaker. And I want to speak to the work of the Sergeant-at-Arms based on what I've observed during my, granted, very little time that I've been here. But I have been able to sort of observe

some really important work from the Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Speaker. So I want to speak to that.

I also want to speak to what I feel is at stake with this bill, and that gets to the core of why this NDP caucus, why the opposition opposes this bill as strongly as we do. We have a lot of desperate people in my riding of Regina Elphinstone-Centre, Mr. Speaker. It's not all good news in my riding. And really we've seen the struggle of folks in that riding go from bad to worse recently, not just with these changes to SIS [Saskatchewan income support] but with the skyrocket in the cost of living, Mr. Speaker. Every week we see people coming in — evicted, children apprehended, struggling to feed their families, Mr. Speaker — and that really backs people into a corner. So we deal with some people in some pretty desperate situations with mental health issues. Of course we have the addiction crisis. All of these have combined to really create something of a perfect storm in my riding.

And so we've had some situations, Mr. Speaker, that we've had to bring to the Sergeant-at-Arms' attention and we've had to work with him. And so I've had some personal dealings with the sergeant in terms of those incidents, in terms of making sure my staff are safe, making sure that I'm safe, my family's safe. And it's really unfortunate that it came to that but I understand why it did, and I think it will continue to be an issue, given how desperate the situation is out there.

And I want to speak to the professionalism of the sergeant because I had the experience of having that direct experience of having to notify the Sergeant-at-Arms and seeing his response. It was very professional. He worked with other local law enforcement, and I felt very safe. My staff felt very safe. And it really reminded me of how offensive it is that this government is seeking to bypass that Board of Internal Economy process and ram through this piece of legislation when we have a process that works very well, Mr. Speaker. We have a process that works very well.

And you don't have to take it from me. You know, the good work of the Sergeant-at-Arms was put on full display a few months ago when we had to deal with what many refer to as the trucker blockade here in Regina. And the Sergeant-at-Arms and his team, they exceeded expectations and they received accolades, well deserved — from their colleagues, in the media — and again it just reinforces the disbelief on this side about why the government is making this move at this time.

And they haven't been really good at answering that question. We've asked again and again, you know, what are the incidents that have led you to think that this bill is necessary? And they're not being transparent. And it's concerning, you know. Many of us have spoken to the fact that we bring our families here, that we bring our young children here. And for the government not to be upfront about that, it really speaks to a certain degree of bad faith, Mr. Speaker.

This was a bill tabled by the House Leader, Mr. Speaker. He hasn't been willing to go on the record, though, to defend the bill and to speak to the need for this bill. The House Leader, as we know, he's a lawyer by education, and so you know, he really should know better, especially him. Because what I feel this bill is addressing is this government's discomfort with people's protests, people's criticism of them, all of which we all should

know is protected under the Charter, under 2(b), “Freedom of expression.” The House Leader should know that, and he should know better, Mr. Speaker.

Freedom of expression is among the most important sections under the Charter. It’s described as the lifeblood of a democracy, Mr. Speaker. And political speech is a particular kind of freedom of expression, and it’s the most important type of expression. And it can only be curtailed in service of the most compelling government interests. And I know I’m going back to basics here, Mr. Speaker — I’m quoting from Peter Hogg — but I think it’s important given that this was a bill tabled by the House Leader, who again I say should know better.

I really believe, Mr. Speaker, that no matter how much you disagree with someone, you need to protect, with all your might, their right to say those things. And I shared very little in common with the protesters that we saw a couple months ago, that formed part of again what was referred to as the trucker blockade, but I really do believe in their ability to protest.

And my belief in that right is really what motivated me in my prior profession as a defence lawyer, as a constitutional lawyer, Mr. Speaker. And it’s quite easy to defend the right of people who you agree with to protest, Mr. Speaker. That’s very easy to do. But it’s really when you’re faced with views that you don’t agree with, that you may even find offensive or objectionable in some way, that our principles are tested.

And as we know, the right to express oneself is not just about the content of what you’re saying; it’s the form. It’s the decision of where you do it and how you do it. And there’s no place that is more fundamental, Mr. Speaker, than being able to do it right here, right outside this building in view of policy-makers, of lawmakers. We can’t imagine a location for expression that is more important than within view of this institution.

And so that is what animates a lot of the questions we have on this side, Mr. Speaker. What is this going to look like? Why are we reducing the Sergeant-at-Arms to a purely ceremonial role where he’ll only have jurisdiction over this floor — not in the rotunda, not in the offices, not on the front steps, maybe not even in the balcony, maybe not even in your balcony? It’s unclear from the legislation. Why are we doing that? What are they so afraid of?

And I had a bit of an experience in terms of getting a bit of a sense of what they’re afraid of. I had the great privilege of representing the folks at the Justice for Our Stolen Children camp before I stepped away from that case and joined the political life that I’m now in, Mr. Speaker. And we really see a contradiction in this government in terms of their attitude towards that protest and their attitude towards, say, the trucker blockade where the Premier, when asked to denounce that conduct, said, well they’re certainly getting everyone’s attention — a very different tone than he took when Tristen Durocher sat on the west lawn, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to speak a little bit about that group, the Justice for Our Stolen Children group, because I think it speaks to the importance of protecting this right to freedom of expression, Mr. Speaker. That was a group of people who erected tipis on the lawn in the dead of winter — I believe it was in February — and

they lit a sacred fire in recognition of their lost and stolen children. And really they did that to bring attention to the treatment of the state of not just this government, but governments going a long ways back, Mr. Speaker, and their treatment of Indigenous communities and in particular children, the overrepresentation of youth in prison and in care.

[14:45]

But for many of these people, such as Rochelle Dubois, who is one of the people that founded the Justice for Our Stolen Children camp, these systemic issues were very personal. Almost every single one of the founding members of that camp had lost a child or a grandchild, sometimes into the foster system. But in the case of Rochelle, she was . . . Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I get a little bit choked up when I talk about Rochelle. Rochelle lost her son and she was dissatisfied with the investigation into his death, and so she felt compelled to do something about it. She had tried to do many things about it up to that point and nothing had worked. And so she thought, hey, I’m going to go sit on the west lawn and they’re going to have to listen to me.

So that group, they lit a sacred fire and that fire did not go out for months and months, Mr. Speaker. And through that act they were within view of the legislature, the visitors to the park that day, people driving up and down Albert Street, one of our busiest streets in the city. They were conveying their message, asking for change, criticizing the government, hoping that it would result in positive change, Mr. Speaker.

And these kinds of acts are so crucial to a democracy because they are all part of a rich exchange of ideas. And I can’t tell you how many people walked by that camp and stopped to chat with them. And their eyes were opened. Their hearts were opened by what they were doing. They learned a little bit more about our history, about what was going on, and it changed their minds. And that’s what this is all about — the seeking out of our closest approximation of truth and justice through the exchange of ideas. That’s what this is about.

And that’s what we’re worried about, this new security force. How will they balance those issues, Mr. Speaker? That’s what we’re concerned about. Because certainly with Justice for Our Stolen Children camp, there was a question about how the balancing took place there.

And I’m not going to speak to that because that’s currently before the courts. And it’s not an easy balance, balancing the right of people to protest and the need for other things, whether it’s safety or order or institutions to function in certain ways. That’s not an easy balance. But all the more reason that we need the people making those decisions in law enforcement to have experience and knowledge of those rights, and all the more reason that we need those decisions to be made in a non-partisan way, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that really impressed me from my first dealings with the Sergeant-at-Arms’ office is they clearly get that balance, Mr. Speaker. They understand the importance of the job we do here. They understand, you know, that we all have families and that we all have, you know, several duties that we’re trying to juggle.

They understand the importance of this institution, what we do in this House, and the need to allow that to take place. But they also understand and appreciate, you know, the rights of people to come to this building, to petition us, to criticize us. I've observed the sergeant dealing with those folks all the time. They're firm. They're respectful. They get it, Mr. Speaker.

And so we have a lot of questions on this side about whether this new political appointment, this new partisan security force, will have a deep respect for that need to balance the rights of individuals and the need for the folks in this building to do the work that we do.

And, Mr. Speaker, this concern that we have, it's not hypothetical. We have good reason to be concerned, because that government has a concerning track record of replacing competent individuals with their pals. And we saw the most recent example with the Saskatchewan Health Authority with the appointment of Raynelle Wilson, Mr. Speaker, a political staffer who has absolutely no experience in health administration. They just created a job for her. What, the vice-president of systemic enterprises or something? Like, it's bad, Mr. Speaker, so we are concerned and we have reason to be.

Mr. Speaker, I said at the beginning that my colleagues had spoken at length to this bill. I've reviewed all of their comments. I found it very entertaining and educational. There is really not a corner of this bill that this opposition hasn't scrutinized. I want to say I'm really proud of the work that we've done on this side.

And it's all part of that process, governance and accountability, that democracy, the principles of democracy that we're trying to protect. And that goes to the heart of why we're opposing this bill as strongly as we are. But all that to say that the implications of this bill, its warts have been very thoroughly canvassed by my colleagues. And so with that, I will move to adjourn debate on Bill 70.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 71

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wyant that **Bill No. 71 — *The Insurance Amendment Act, 2021*** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have a lot that I want to share or talk about on this bill. I had the opportunity already to speak. So have most of my colleagues had the opportunity to have their opportunity to put some concerns, some questions on the record, and they went through that process.

I know that there's going to be more work that needs to be done in committee by the critic, and I know that will happen. And she'll have the opportunity to ask the minister, the officials, and individuals the questions that they need, and making sure who

was consulted and stuff. So I don't have any more comments on Bill No. 71, *The Insurance Amendment Act, 2021* and allow it to go through the process to go to committee.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the member that Bill No. 71 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Second reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this bill be committed? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — To the Standing Committee of Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

The Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Bill No. 73

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Marit that **Bill No. 73 — *The Animal Production Act*** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to join in on Bill No. 73, *The Animal Production Act*. I just want to just make a few comments. I know a number of my colleagues have had an opportunity to speak to this bill. I had an opportunity to look at it, try to understand it. There's a number of pieces of legislation that will come together to form one Act.

So I know the critic will do what he needs to do to make sure the questions are answered and, you know, go to committee and do the work that needs to be done. And hopefully everyone's been consulted that this is the right piece of legislation as it goes through the work it needs to. So I'm prepared, Mr. Speaker, to allow Bill 73 to go to the work that it needs to in the process to get to committee. I'm prepared to allow that Bill 73 to go forward.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the minister that Bill No. 73 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Second reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this bill be committed? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — To the Standing Committee on the

Economy.

The Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on the Economy. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In order to facilitate the work of the 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 until 1:30 tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 14:56.]

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