



THIRD SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

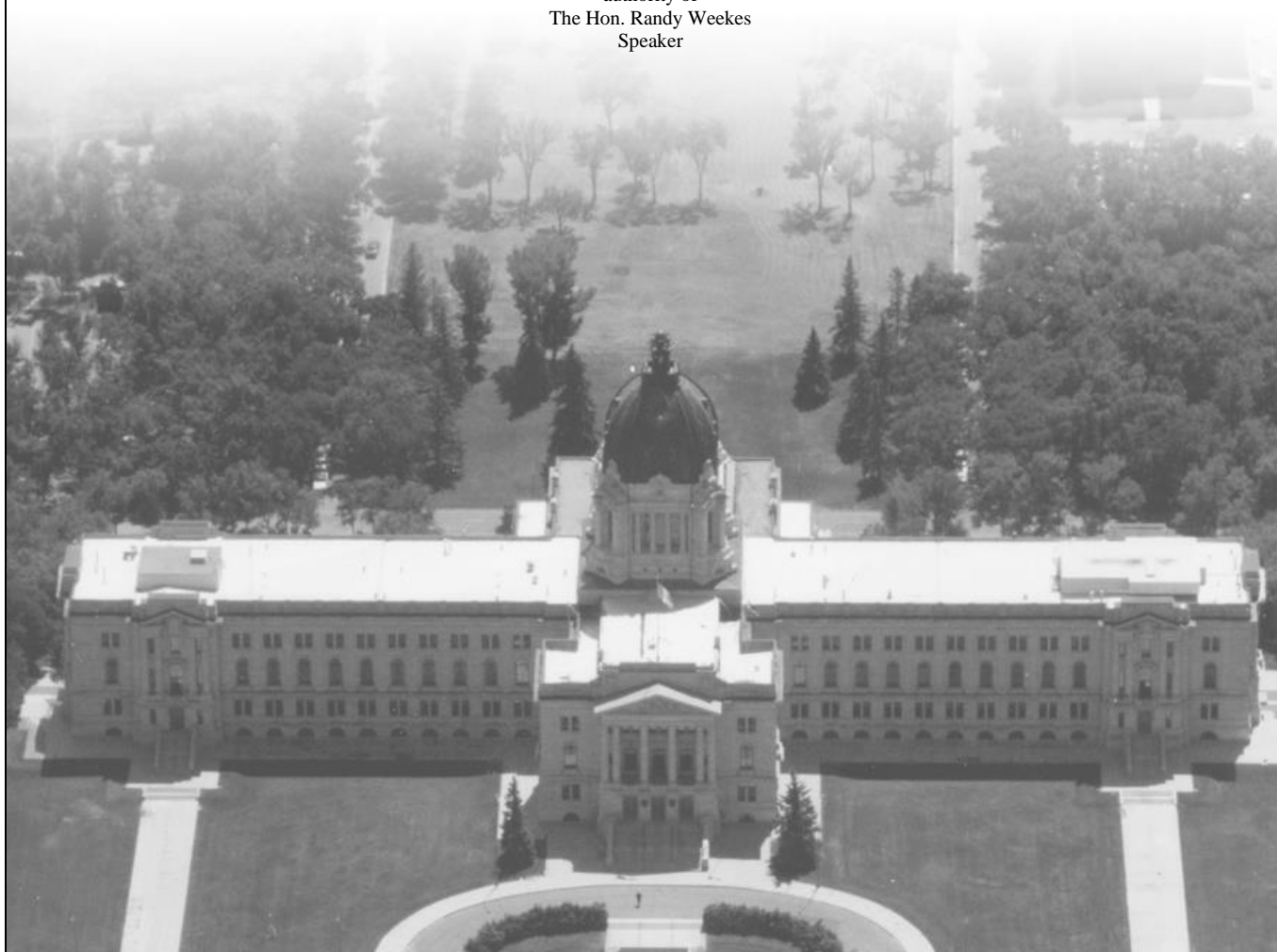
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Randy Weekes
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
3rd 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 — Carla Beck

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

Standings

Government Caucus: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 45; Opposition Caucus: New Democratic Party (NDP) — 12;
Independent: Saskatchewan United Party (Ind.) — 1; Vacant — 3

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Iris Lang
Law Clerk & Parliamentary Counsel — Kenneth S. Ring, K.C.
Deputy Clerk — Kathy Burianyk
Principal Clerk — Robert Park

Sergeant-at-Arms — Lyall Frederiksen

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Legislative Assembly are available
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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of myself and a member opposite, we would like to jointly ask for leave to make a statement regarding the National Day of Mourning for workers killed, injured, or having suffered illness on the job. We will be going back and forth with the names, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

COMMEMORATIVE STATEMENTS

National Day of Mourning

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, today I rise in recognition of the National Day of Mourning for workers who have lost their lives, were seriously injured, or suffered illnesses due to work-related hazards and occupational exposures. On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, I offer our deepest condolences to the families, friends, colleagues, and communities who are mourning the tragic loss of a loved one.

In recognition of the National Day of Mourning, which occurs on April 28th, the flags of the Legislative Building and other government buildings will fly at half-mast tomorrow. Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues in the legislature, as well as all people throughout the province, take a moment to honour the lives lost and that we all work together to eliminate workplace injuries, illnesses, and fatalities. Health and safety should always be the top priority, no matter where we are or what we are doing, as it is the only way we can ensure that everyone comes home safely at the end of the day.

In 2022 the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board accepted 39 claims for workplace-related fatalities in the province, and that is 39 too many. Mr. Speaker, not included in today's numbers are those individuals who lost their lives working on Saskatchewan farms and ranches. We must continue working towards Mission: Zero — zero injuries, zero fatalities, and zero suffering — because zero is the only acceptable number.

I am deeply saddened when I think of each of these workers and the families, friends, colleagues, and communities that they leave behind. Everyone grieves and honours loved ones in different ways, and we want to be respectful of their families' wishes. Today we have consent to read the names of 30 of the workers whose lives were cut short due to a workplace illness or injury.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members please rise while I read the names of the following workers:

Keith Bacon
Leonard Downer

Bernard Behr
Wayne Farnel

Rodney Flaman
Wilmer Gonzalez
Jim Hauk
Perry Hendry
Jesse Johnson
Delbert Josephson

Andre Gallant
Kelly Hamilton
David Heisler
Dean Horn
William Johnson

I would now invite the member opposite to assist in reading the remainder of the names.

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

Ms. Sarauer: —

Ronald Kurbis
Andrew McCann
Jose Mexicano
Brenda Paul
Jerome Salamon
Richard Seitz
Hugh Smith
Tanner VanDeSype

Marion Matechuk
John McEwan
Lyle Mund
Dennis Pointer
Brian Schoffer
Gregory Selinger
Evert Vandenberg

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I now ask that we observe a moment of silence to commemorate the Day of Mourning and to honour the lives that have been lost in workplaces throughout our province.

[The Assembly observed a moment of silence.]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to all the members.

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — I would like to table the annual report from the Ombudsman and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner in accordance with section 38(1) of *The Ombudsman Act* and section 23(1) of the public interest disclosure commissioner Act. The Ombudsman has submitted the annual reports for the year 2022.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I'd like to introduce the Ombudsman please. Joining us today in the gallery are Sharon Pratchler, the Ombudsman and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner. Seated with her from her team is Leila Dueck, Rene Descottes, Jesseca Beals, and Femi Atilola. Please join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to introduce a couple people seated in your gallery, one who's no stranger to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, someone who's spent his life in agriculture, in farming, and through the co-operative movement, Mr. Speaker. Long-time farmer; also worked with crop insurance; active with the Bulyea Co-op, Mr.

Speaker — I should say it's one of the finest Co-ops, one of the finest stores in this province, Mr. Speaker — also active with the credit union, the Strasbourg Credit Union at the time, Mr. Speaker; and of course he was an exceptional MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] as the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood from 1991 to 1999, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to introduce my friend Dale Flavel to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and to thank him for his life of service on so many fronts to the people of Saskatchewan. And I know that that continues. Him and his wife, Georgina, live now in Regina, but they're still connected back to Last Mountain and to the agricultural community as well.

So I ask all members to join with me in welcoming Dale Flavel. But seated with him, and I think the reason he's here today is, his sister-in-law Shirley has told him that she had never been in the Assembly here before. So they did a tour here today, Mr. Speaker.

Shirley was born and raised in Windthorst, but then her and her husband, Jim, raised their five children here in Regina. And Shirley Svenson worked as a registered nurse in Regina her entire career. And on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, Shirley, we want to say thank you to you for your life and service in health care and to your province.

I ask all members to join with me in welcoming Dale Flavel and Shirley Svenson to their Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Keisig: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the member opposite and welcome Dale to his Assembly. I've never had the pleasure of meeting Dale, but I want to share one little story. In my constituency office, Mr. Speaker, I sit on the very same chair that Dale bought brand new. So I am trying to be very fastidious with taxpayer money. So I always think of you, Dale, every time I'm working in my office in Balcarres.

So to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, join me in welcoming Dale Flavel to this, his Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I would like to welcome some amazing grade 8 students that have joined us here today in the west gallery from the Wheatland Christian School which is located close to Neilburg. They are accompanied here today with their teacher, Chris Barkman. Please give a wave. Thank you so much for joining us here today. I'm very much looking forward to meeting with you after question period, as I anticipate you're going to learn a lot when you're watching the actual question period today.

And with that, I ask that all members of this Assembly welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Friesen: — I ask leave for an extended introduction.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Mr. Friesen: — To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, and to all members, it is my great pleasure to introduce my daughter Morgan here today. I speak of Morgan often in this House, and Morgan is a strong advocate for mental health, Mr. Speaker. And she has done some amazing things on her Instagram and on her Facebook, speaking to the challenges that she also has faced.

Derek Meyers, our former colleague . . . I wish Derek could have met you, because Derek shared stories of his daughter as well. And just so very proud to have Morgan here today. I said she's a very strong advocate for mental health, Mr. Speaker, and I couldn't say that enough.

I would like all members to join me in welcoming my daughter, Morgan Friesen, to her Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it gives me great pleasure to introduce 34 grade 12 students from Peacock Collegiate in Moose Jaw seated in the west gallery. They're here today with their teacher Carrie Kiefer.

Mr. Speaker, when each of us is out door knocking and campaigning, we have the rare occasion to find an individual on the doorstep who is truly engaged and challenges us with some difficult questions. Ms. Kiefer was that person for me, Mr. Speaker. And I don't know how long I spent on Ms. Kiefer's doorstep, but it could have been all day. I enjoyed the conversation and the difficult questions, and I expect nothing less from her students later after question period today.

So if all members could please join me in welcoming these students and Ms. Kiefer to their Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Mr. Goudy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: that the NDP [New Democratic Party]-Liberal federal tax on carbon continues to make life more expensive for Saskatchewan residents; that the federal Liberal-NDP coalition government continues to be disingenuous with their rhetoric surrounding the carbon tax; and that according to the parliamentary budget officer's analysis, most households will pay more in fuel charges and GST [goods and services tax], as well as receiving slightly lower incomes, than they will receive in climate action incentive payments; despite promises from the federal government that the tax would remain revenue-neutral and that families would benefit, the reality is that families are paying more than they receive.

In the prayer that reads as follows:

We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to call upon the Government of Canada to immediately end the federal carbon tax and support Saskatchewan's development as a global supplier of food, fuel, and fertilizer.

The below undersigned are residents of Hudson Bay. And thank you, Speaker. I do so present.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again today to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan calling for improved mental health services for northern and rural Saskatchewan. These citizens wish to bring to our attention that the rate of suicide among Indigenous people is three times higher than that of non-Indigenous people; that suicide rates of Indigenous people living on-reserve are twice as high as those living off-reserve; that historical and ongoing impacts of colonization, displacement, and intergenerational trauma are related to the high rates of suicide among Indigenous people.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a petition from several years ago. This was created this year, well after the Pillars for Life document came out, well after the failed commitment of this government to follow through with a meaningful, real suicide prevention strategy.

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 address and work with vulnerable communities in northern and rural areas and to provide adequate mental health funding and services for northern and rural Indigenous communities.

This is signed by individuals from La Ronge, Saskatoon, and Warman, Mr. Speaker. I do so present.

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

[10:15]

Mr. Teed: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present our petition calling on the Government of Saskatchewan to join with municipalities and provinces across Canada to codify a ban on conversion therapy. Mr. Speaker, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to attention the following: *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* names sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity as one of the prohibited grounds of discrimination; and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child indicates that children should not be discriminated against based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

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 ban the practice of conversion therapy and prohibit the transportation of youth and adults outside of Saskatchewan for such purposes.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories today reside in Nipawin and Melfort. I do so present.

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm on my feet again to present a petition calling on this government to enact adequate and equitable SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] rates. This government didn't increase SAID rates for nearly a decade, which represented a 20 per cent decrease in benefits to folks on the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program. This is a program for people with significant and enduring disabilities with barriers to work.

With this past budget, they announced an extra buck a day. That's a 2 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. What a slap in the face. The other thing that this petition calls on this government to do is to stop clawing back folks on the SAID program's pension, requiring them to apply early and then clawing it back dollar for dollar leaving them with less when they reach their old age.

Mr. Speaker, with that I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly to call on the Government of Saskatchewan to, one, increase SAID rates to account for inflation; respect the constitutional rights of persons with disability and halt discriminatory clawback practices; index SAID rates going forward; and provide targeted relief to those in deepest poverty.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories of this petition reside in Vonda and Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I request leave for introduction.

The Speaker: — The member has asked leave to make an introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today we are joined by some of the students from Regina Trades & Skills Centre, their program manager, and a few other folks in your gallery. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately not all the students could make it; today is the last day of their programs and they are spending the day meeting their new employers, whom they will start working with next week.

Give us a wave, please, as I call your name. It is Dmytro Babych, Austin Billy-Coleman, Gianni Brown, and Faiz Damania, Andrew Dungen, Eric Gabriel, Dakota Manhas-Poitas, and Manpreet Singh, Anthony Tawiyaka, Justin Whitehead, Owen Windigo, and their instructor, Kris Wall, and their operations manager, Melissa Dobrowolski.

And we're also joined by Mike and Alison Smith, the owners of Wheatland Roofing. They help arrange the project and provide the material at no cost to the homeowners that these students helped earlier this week. And Brian Shankowsky, the executive director of Regina Trades & Skills Centre, is also here. I know Brian since he used to be coaching the Balgonie Griffins a long time, about 12 years ago. I would like to say thank you very much to Brian and his team for the great work they're doing for Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, you will hear more in our member's statement, but these students are finishing up their last day of the roofing school today and will be leaving the legislature to get back to the work right after this introduction. I ask all the members to join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join with the member opposite and welcome all of these distinguished guests to their Assembly here today. Just first, thank you so much to the business leaders for their involvement. Thank you for the leadership and the instructors for this incredible program.

Regina skills and trade centre has been an incredible success. It's created opportunity, extended opportunity to so many in our community, Mr. Speaker. But very importantly I want to just wish these graduates nothing but the best. I want to give you a huge credit, huge shout-out for taking this step in life, committing to the program, and for what this is going to mean for your futures and for your families and for the future of this province.

And we know it's not an easy thing to commit to education and to take that on, and we just want to say to each and every one of you: congratulations, best wishes, and thank you for joining us here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — I also wanted to join in with the welcoming of . . .

The Speaker: — You should be asking leave to make an introduction, please. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you. A brief introduction. I also wanted to join in with thanking Wheatland Roofing because, you know, it's so important that we have businesses that understand what it takes for new people who want to enter into a

non-traditional field. So thank you so much to the Smiths. They've stepped up and are going to ensure that programs like this are successful. So thank you so much for Wheatland Roofing for making projects like this possible. So thank you so much.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Batoche.

Tourism Week in Saskatchewan

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's another great day in Saskatchewan. April 24th to 30th is Tourism Week in this province. Our tourism industry employs nearly 70,000 residents in full- and part-time positions while generating over \$2 billion in annual travel spending. Whether you're going up North for some of the best fishing in the world or spending time with your loved ones in one of our beautiful natural parks, there's something for everyone.

I encourage residents and visitors to discover something new this summer. Plan some road trips, try new activities, taste different flavours, and explore the unique and authentic experience that sets Saskatchewan apart from other destinations. Our tourism sector is ready to help you find what you're looking for even if you don't quite know what you might find.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly I want to thank all of our workers in the tourism industry. Thank you for helping show how amazing our province is and why people keep coming back for so many years. We're excited and ready to host many tourists who choose Saskatchewan as their getaway this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

National Day of Mourning

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, on this National Day of Mourning I rise to honour and remember the workers who have lost their lives, been injured, or become ill on the job.

Each year we take a moment to reflect on the human cost of workplace incidents and the impact they have on the lives of those left behind. Each of these losses represents a tragedy that has left a lasting impact on those who knew and loved these workers. Today we remember them and send our heartfelt condolences to their families and friends.

The National Day of Mourning is an opportunity for us to reaffirm our commitment to creating safe and healthy workplaces for all workers in Saskatchewan. We must continue to prioritize the well-being of our workers and to work together to identify and address the hazards and risks that they face on a daily basis.

As we reflect on the past year, let's also recognize the additional challenges and stresses faced by workers during these unprecedented times. We appreciate their dedication and hard work, and we must do everything we can to ensure their safety and well-being.

Today we honour the memory of those we have lost and we

renew our commitment to creating a safer and healthier future for all workers in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

Roofing Students Give Back

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week roofing students from Regina Trades & Skills Centre got some hands-on experience while giving back to their community. Twelve students put their skills to the test and went to the job site, where they saved Rachel Ruskowski and her daughter thousands of dollars in labour costs while giving them a brand new roof over their head.

Mr. Speaker, as many homeowners know, a leaky roof can be one of the worst impacts on the home structure and on the pocket, not to mention the damage it can do to your mental health. Thankfully these skilled students were on hand to lend some assistance while getting valuable experience.

RTSC [Regina Trades & Skills Centre] operation manager, Melissa Dobrowolski, described it as a great experience that helped make these students more employable in the future while they finish up week four of their practical training program. Students got to learn so much more than just how to put the roof together. They got to experience all the different elements and challenges of being roofers, from the customer service aspect to the respect involved when being on the customer's property and how to handle a timeline of work.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, thank you to all the RTSC and their students for their excellent work in giving back to the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Former Member for Souris-Estevan Recognized

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to recognize Kim Thorson, who recently celebrated his 91st birthday on March 2nd. Kim is a former CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] and NDP MLA who served his constituency of Souris-Estevan from 1956 to 1960 and 1971 to 1975. He is the only surviving member from the Tommy Douglas years. And Kim spent much of his life serving his community.

Kim was born in Macoun, Saskatchewan, attended the University of Saskatchewan and received a Bachelor of Science and Agriculture, later taking a year of economics before being elected as an MLA. After serving as an MLA for four years, he went back to school and received a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Bachelor of Law degree, becoming Queen's Counsel in 1972. Kim returned to Estevan, practising law until he was again elected as an NDP MLA, this time serving as minister of Industry. He also served on the board of the Weyburn Chamber of Commerce, the Weyburn United Way, the Weyburn Hospital Foundation, and on the board of the Soo Line Historical Museum, and was a Rotary Club member for many years.

I know that Kim is an avid watcher of question period, Mr.

Speaker. So if you are watching today, Kim, thank you for your service and happy birthday.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Author Receives Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Miguel Fenrich, a resident of Wilkie, has published not one but two books; opened his own publishing company, Supernova Press; and is working as a front-line reporter for The Battlefords regional *News-Optimist* — all before he has celebrated his 21st birthday, Mr. Speaker.

Miguel is also a board member for the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild and the publishing group SaskBooks. Miguel started writing his first book titled *Blue* in June of 2020, and it was published a short time later in June of 2022. Miguel's second book published is called *The Homesteaders* and it was released January 13th of this year. Mr. Speaker, Miguel continues to write. In fact he will also be publishing a third book before the end of this year entitled *What Lies in the Valley*.

Growing up, Mr. Speaker, Miguel was not a writer. He was however an avid storyteller. Miguel enjoyed playing pretend, creating scenarios in his head, and then acting them out. One day he realized he could write down those things and a young novelist was born.

It was my great honour, Mr. Speaker, to present Miguel Fenrich with the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal at our celebration on January 19th, 2023. Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of this Assembly join me in congratulating Miguel Fenrich on his successful writing and publishing career. I wish him every success as he continues to pursue his dreams. Thank you.

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

Sask Polytechnic Students Win Big in Shell Eco-marathon Americas

Mr. Friesen: — It's another great day in Saskatoon Riversdale, Mr. Speaker. And last month the Minister of Advanced Education and I had the opportunity to tour Saskatchewan Polytechnic in Saskatoon. They're revving their way towards a sustainable future. Mr. Speaker, this included a tour of the automotive service technician facility where I graduated from many, many years ago.

[10:30]

Since September they have been designing, building, refining, and testing urban concept cars, and on April 16th their hard work paid off. Mr. Speaker, Sask Poly won first place at the Shell Eco-marathon Americas challenge at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and in true Saskatchewan style, these students and their teachers built the frame out of recycled carbon fibre hockey sticks. The 3-D [three dimensional] body was printed using recyclable materials and a special filament with a temperature-triggered,

active-foaming technology, reducing the weight to one-third of a traditionally 3-D printed part.

Mr. Speaker, I'm so happy I was able to see this project before they went off to competition, and I'm proud to see this young group of individuals perform as Saskatchewan people do — with their heart and soul. This impressive group of students have now qualified the urban concept car to compete at the Shell Eco-marathon Drivers' World Championship Grand Final in India.

We wish them all the luck as they keep the pedal to the metal, racing towards the finish line. I ask all members to join me, congratulating them for putting us on the international stage once again.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

International Recognition for Founder of Close Cuts for Cancer

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Bitter or better, Mr. Speaker, my wife, Leone's, words as we learned of our son Brayden's diagnosis of cancer in 1998. Leone's been a driving force behind Brayden Ottenbreit Close Cuts for Cancer since its inception 26 years ago in an effort to make something good from a bad situation. Better not bitter, raising funds through a head-shave fundraiser for research.

She also works tirelessly and selflessly to make life better for those on their cancer journey in the local level through many projects. She often says the success of Close Cuts is only due to the support of the community, and looks forward to our annual head shave this May 27th in Yorkton.

Through her many efforts, initiatives in our community and province, she has garnered recognition nationally by cancer agencies and philanthropy organizations, as well as provincially with a Centennial Medal, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee, as well as locally by our Yorkton Chamber of Commerce through their Community Merit Award.

It made me so proud recently to see her get international recognition at an awards event in San Antonio, where she was recognized with a Saint Beauty Wildflower Humanitarian Award out of a possible 33,000 recipients. Her shock and humility was evident as she was called forward to be acknowledged.

She exemplifies her favourite scripture, Mr. Speaker, 2 Corinthians 1:4: "God comforts us in our troubles so we can comfort others in their time of need."

I invite all members to help me congratulate my constituent Leone Ottenbreit on recognition well deserved.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Funding for Education

Ms. Beck: — Every day this week, we've pressed this tired and out-of-touch government for answers on the state of our schools.

Hallway education, cuts to per-student funding, choices that hurt students and hurt teachers — that is this government's record.

Now, Mr. Speaker, some of those teachers will be here on Saturday on the steps of this legislature to make their voices heard. I'll be there. Members of our team will be there.

A simple question to the Premier: does he have the guts to show up and listen to their voices?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, here's the reality of education funding in this province: record investments in education funding in K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12], Mr. Speaker — over \$2 billion last year. In this budget that's just been tabled, almost \$50 million more in education funding, Mr. Speaker, the largest increase in education funding over the last eight years. And that's a real commitment to the children of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that member's a former trustee. She knows how this works, Mr. Speaker. The per-people grant, Mr. Speaker, the operating grant is based on projections that are provided by the school divisions early in the year, Mr. Speaker, and those are reflected in the grant.

We're encouraged, Mr. Speaker, and everyone on this side of the House is encouraged, by the number of children that are now attending our school divisions. Record numbers, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Education has indicated on a number of occasions that he's going to be going out to meet with school divisions to talk about the issues that are facing the school divisions, Mr. Speaker, and have those conversations in the next short period of time, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed to public education, Mr. Speaker, and . . .

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

Ms. Beck: — Well, Mr. Speaker, that sounds like a no. But they should show up because it's choices by this tired and out-of-touch government that are forcing cuts to our kids' classrooms. It's crystal clear. Saskatoon Public, I quote: "We will have to make cuts to balance the budget."

This Premier and the Minister of Education, they're the ones responsible for these cuts. Why don't they have the courage to face teachers and hear what they're facing when they cut funding to our kids' classrooms?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I can tell that member one thing, Mr. Speaker. I'm a former Chair of the Saskatoon Public School Board, and the Minister of Crown Investments is a former Chair as well. And he can tell the members opposite one thing: he'd rather be dealing, when we were Chairs, with the people on this side of the House than the government that we had to deal with when they were on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker — 400 fired teachers, 176 closed schools.

Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to continuing to fund

public education, Mr. Speaker, and the best interests of the children in our classroom. And the people of Saskatchewan can count on that.

The Speaker: — I'd just like to caution the Leader of the Opposition about the word "guts." That's out of order. And please keep the heckling down so we can hear the response. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Affordability and Provincial Economy

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, it's not only on their abysmal record when it comes to funding education that this tired and out-of-touch government is failing. They're also failing to deliver when it comes to the cost of living, when it comes to paying for groceries, the food that people actually put on their table. More Saskatchewan people than anywhere else in the country are struggling. Three out of five people in this province say it's difficult or very difficult.

Is that Premier so out of touch that he's no longer bothered by the fact that three in five people in this province are struggling to feed their families?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, we do not deny that there are pressures in inflationary times, and that's why we had the \$500 affordability tax credit, Mr. Speaker, which was more than the members opposite said they would do should they form government.

But we also have previous answers to demonstrate how there is affordability measures in our budget. The members opposite didn't necessarily like me comparing our budget to the tax rates in NDP BC [British Columbia], so let's just compare to NDP Saskatchewan.

Today a family of four with 75,000 income pays \$1,891 in provincial income tax, Mr. Speaker. You know what that same family was paying in provincial income tax in the NDP's last year in government? How much do you think, Mr. Speaker? Anyone want to guess? Well it was \$5,015 in income tax, Mr. Speaker. Same family, same income, \$5,000 tax bill.

And the member opposite's heckling, out of touch. Well I'll tell you, the NDP, you're out of touch and nothing's changed. It's the same old NDP.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, every time they stand up, those tired lines. They show more and more just how out of touch they are with the reality facing people in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the cost-of-living crisis is making life harder for everyone in this province. It's no question. But it's the people on the margins, those on fixed incomes, our seniors who are impacted the most.

Now this tired and out-of-touch government managed, Mr. Speaker, a buck a day to deal with the cost of food, rent, and their power and energy hikes. Mr. Speaker, a buck a day is shameful.

How is a buck a day supposed to help people who are struggling with the cost of living?

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Wow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the obvious absence of the Premier, I will take that question. I'm actually not sure why they do that, Mr. Speaker. They've done that all week. The Premier's been conducting business internationally, and they constantly refer and pretend that the Premier is here when they know he's not. So I think they just kind of look foolish doing that, Mr. Speaker.

With the regard to the question, the Minister of Finance has repeatedly addressed the question, answered.

A question though that the members opposite refuse to address is this, and I think it's because they have a crystal clear position on it, Mr. Speaker, and that is their belief and position that the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement is illegal. That is the position that has been put on the record by their critic, Mr. Speaker, and this is the agreement that has transferred natural resources to the province of Saskatchewan to be owned by the people of Saskatchewan. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they're supporting a lawsuit to have those resources owned by Justin Trudeau, something we . . .

The Speaker: — The Minister of Trade and Export Development knows full well you don't comment on the absence of a member, especially the Premier. And asking the question to the Premier is in order. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to add "desperate" to the list including "out of touch" over there.

Mr. Speaker, I've been completely clear. We know that the provinces have jurisdiction over natural resources. That minister knows it as well. You know, it works in here, Mr. Speaker; it doesn't work so well out there. And I again invite them, I dare them to be on the steps of the legislature on Saturday.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has failed to offer any help to those facing a generational cost-of-living crisis. Out of touch. Mr. Speaker, their policies are pushing people onto the streets. How is that growth that works for everyone?

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Ninety-five hundred jobs created over the course of the last year. Exports up 32 per cent, Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last year. Wholesale trade up over 30 per cent over the course of the last year. Fifty-three per cent increase over the last three months in urban housing starts.

All statistics I guarantee, Mr. Speaker, that would not be the case if those members ever had the chance to form government. And a part of the reason why that is, Mr. Speaker, is because their position on the record is that the NRTA, the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement, is illegal. That is their position, Mr. Speaker, that it is illegal.

They are supporting a lawsuit that would have the NRTA revoked, which apparently Justin Trudeau is giving consideration to as well, to take the ownership of natural resources away from the people of this province and give them to Justin Trudeau. We will never support that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say this real slowly for the minister opposite. I've been clear. We've been clear. He's going to need some new lines.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — In her recent meet-and-greet with Jagmeet fundraiser, did the member for Saskatoon Nutana let him know that her party, the opposition, her leader, apparently support exclusive jurisdiction over provincial natural resources? Did she let him know that her party is apparently, apparently against the carbon tax, although she supports the carbon tax? And what position did she pass on about the clean electricity regulations, the federal fuel standard, the cap on oil production, Bill C-69? Killers for affordability. Jagmeet, their federal puppet master, Mr. Speaker, loves those policies; so does she. But her party apparently does not? Is the Leader of the Opposition content to let others speak for her? What is her position?

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

Ms. Conway: — Mr. Speaker, our leader has been crystal clear on this issue. We have exclusive jurisdiction over our resources thanks to an NDP government and Premier Allan Blakeney, an NDP premier. How disgraceful, Mr. Speaker, that they return to this talking point when we're talking about people who can't house themselves, who can't feed themselves in this province under their watch. How dare they, Mr. Speaker?

This government is completely missing in action when it comes to the cost of living. A buck a day. A buck a day. It's absurd and it's a slap in the face. Families struggling to make ends meet, and these are the kind of political tactics that they pull. We deserve so much better from our government, Mr. Speaker, than we're getting from this tired and out-of-touch bunch — day after day they show their colours — one that is sitting on a record windfall revenue. Why is the minister choosing to force more people onto the streets with rates of support that are completely inadequate?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Mr. Speaker, the only tired and out-of-touch bunch are the tired and out-of-touch bunch who put things on the record and then never speak of them again. Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax is mentioned and then never mentioned. What is their formal position on the carbon tax, clean electricity regulations, the NRTA? Are they writing to their federal puppet masters and formally putting on the record that they are against these harmful positions?

They talk a good game about affordability, but these are the root cause, killers of affordability that we are confronted with in this

country, Mr. Speaker. Were those formally raised at the fundraiser, at the fundraiser with Jagmeet Singh? Are they being formally raised enough, Mr. Speaker, to call attention to the existential reality we face in this province if the NRTA is actually considered illegal by the official opposition? That is a crisis for this country, Mr. Speaker.

[10:45]

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

Social Housing Units

Ms. Conway: — What a desperate deflection, Mr. Speaker. A desperate deflection. Mr. Speaker, this government's choices during a cost-of-living crisis, that's what's happening out there, Mr. Speaker. People are in crisis, and we are leading in homelessness and each day we're seeing more people on the street, Mr. Speaker.

And it's not just in income supports where this government is failing to deliver. People who need an affordable place to rent should be able to turn to their Sask Housing units, but today wait-lists are long even though thousands sit empty. More units today, Mr. Speaker, than this time last year and the year before that.

They're moving in the wrong direction, Mr. Speaker. Why is the minister letting more than 3,000 publicly owned units sit vacant while his policies push more people out into the streets?

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

Hon. Mr. Makowsky: — Mr. Speaker, in terms of Sask Housing, we have units in Saskatchewan. Traditionally it's been those who have been able to live independently, seniors and families and those that need some support, Mr. Speaker. We're working hard with third parties to be able to partner with them to help people live more independently, and that's some of the work we're doing, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of the numbers the member mentioned, some of those units are in rural Saskatchewan that are underused, Mr. Speaker. And in terms of in the larger centres, Mr. Speaker, we're working very hard to repair the ones that are needing of repair as well as ways to increase the uptake of people in those units, Mr. Speaker. We're working hard with our partners on that.

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

Ms. Conway: — Mr. Speaker, those units should be available to Saskatchewan people who need a roof over their heads. And again that vacancy number is going up. It's going in the wrong direction as homelessness grows. Every city across this province, every town; no matter what the size, homelessness is on the rise.

We learned at committee last week that 129 units are vacant in Prince Albert, 282 in Saskatoon, and more than 693 units right here in Regina where we know homelessness has skyrocketed, Mr. Speaker. Those homes are supposed to be providing a safe, affordable house to Saskatchewan people during a cost-of-living crisis, not sitting vacant, not falling apart, not blowing up, Mr.

Speaker. How does this make any sense to that minister?

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

Hon. Mr. Makowsky: — Mr. Speaker, our government is working very hard to repair those units that are potentially available. We're going to spend about \$73 million on maintenance and improvement. We've worked hard in the past to be able to increase the availability, Mr. Speaker. I hope the member is not suggesting we move people in to a unit that's not ready, that has foundation issues or had just recently been flooded, Mr. Speaker.

Some of the things we've done, Mr. Speaker, here in Regina is we're looking to expand a pilot project that we have for vacant units here in Regina with set rates for affordability. People would be able to share rental costs, Mr. Speaker. And so we're looking at other things to expand eligibility. We've done several things in the past, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to continue to work with third parties to have supportive living.

And some of the recent examples, Mr. Speaker, just here in Regina: we partnered with Phoenix Residential, Silver Sage, the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] for that supportive living, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for Municipalities

Ms. Ritchie: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister for Energy and Resources might want to get her facts straight before she accuses me of attending a meeting, when in fact I was dealing with the death of a loved one, not attending the meeting she accuses me of . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Member.

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question is for the Minister of Government Relations. The government is failing to deliver when it comes to the cost of living in communities across our province, and municipalities are left holding the bag.

At the SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] convention, over 90 per cent of municipal leaders called on the government, and I quote, "to immediately increase SIS rates to meet the basic . . ."

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — All I can say is, wow. Mr. Speaker, we went through this last night, but I'll certainly talk about the municipal revenue sharing that our province has been able to grant municipalities with no strings attached, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a record amount of \$297 million will be going to municipalities across the province with no strings attached.

How much of an increase of that has that been since we became government in 2007? 134 per cent increase from when those

members had the opportunity to spend time on this side. That's why those members will not spend time on this side for generations to come, Mr. Speaker, because there is one party in this House that's tired and out of touch, and it's not the government side, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Mr. Speaker, the cost-of-living crisis is hurting everyone in our province, but it's the people living on the margins who are impacted the most. This government's choices have actually increased homelessness in communities large and small. And when provincial governments create a mess like this, it's the municipalities who have to step up and bear the costs.

Why won't this tired and out-of-touch government listen to municipal leaders and scrap their damaging changes that have been downloaded onto municipalities?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we had a very good convention last weekend, or last week actually, with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association where we talked on a lot of different issues. Revenue sharing, municipal revenue sharing was top of mind for municipalities, and the record amount of municipal revenue sharing.

The other topic that was top of mind was the infrastructure issues that they had and the ICIP [Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program] program. And that's why it was so great to work with our municipal partners to lobby the federal government for a new ICIP program that has very little strings attached, so municipalities can put that money to the projects that they think are most important, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I remember many, quite a few years ago, actually about 16 years ago, when I think the term "bear pit" came to light because, Mr. Speaker, back in the day when the NDP had an opportunity to attend SUMA as the government, it was a bear pit as they got eaten up at every SUMA and SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Provincial Assessments in Education

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I asked the government what its solutions were to the failure of our education system under their leadership. I asked the Education minister if he would commit to implementing province-wide standardized tests to improve transparency and accountability. The minister repeatedly said they were working to implement an assessment. This created a buzz with parents asking for more details regarding the government's planned province-wide tests.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Education minister is, where can interested parents go that are seeking greater accountability from this government to learn more about the specifics and details of

these planned province-wide standardized tests?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, thanks for the question. Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister of Education is engaged in some communications with stakeholders in the industry and stakeholders in the sector, Mr. Speaker, to determine the best course forward with respect to implementing some form of testing.

I'll leave that to the Minister of Education to have some further conversations with his stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, but we know how important it is to make sure that we have some testing in this province in that regard. So I'll leave that to the Minister of Education to continue to have his dialogue. Mr. Speaker, I invite the member to reach out to the Minister of Education to have that talk directly, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I asked the minister twice last week if he would commit to province-wide standardized testing, considering we are the only province to not have one of any kind. He committed that they plan to implement an assessment.

However we need specifics. What will the consultation process look like? What grades will it be administered in? What metrics will it track? And will the results be made public and transparent?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned that the Minister of Education is having that correspondence, Mr. Speaker, having discussions with partners and sector partners, Mr. Speaker, to determine the best course of action as he moves forward. I know he's going to continue to have that dialogue, Mr. Speaker, to determine how we can best move forward in that regard. And I'll leave it to the Minister of Education to direct answers directly back to the member.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government continues to use rhetoric with no action. All provinces faced the same issues during the last few years, and yet we are still below the average in student assessment metrics, right across the board. As I reminded the minister last week, one in three grade 3 students cannot read at their grade level. That's happening today, Mr. Speaker. These students are statistically four times less able to graduate.

Mr. Speaker, we need action now, not rhetoric, not wait-and-see attitudes. This government has had years to fix these issues in education. It's had years to implement standardized tests. Why hasn't it done so? It's always reactionary and never proactive, Mr. Speaker. Time is of the essence to correct this government's education crisis.

When will this government take action, Mr. Speaker? How quickly can we expect standardized tests to be implemented? What is the government's timeline? I'm looking for . . .

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, as I'd mentioned before, the Minister of Education is having discussions and conversations with stakeholders in the sector, with his ministry officials, Mr. Speaker, looking at what examples are across the country in order to develop a plan, Mr. Speaker. Let him do his work in good time, Mr. Speaker, if you want to make sure, you want to make sure that as he moves forward that he develops the best plan possible, giving all the information that he can gather, all the metrics that he can gather, Mr. Speaker.

It's important for this education sector, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we have good quality education, that our teachers are able to deliver the programming to students in this province to ensure that they have a bright future, Mr. Speaker. And I know that everyone on this side of the House has great confidence in the Minister of Education to do exactly just that, Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Chair of Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Ms. Ritchie: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 104, *The Local Improvements Amendment Act, 2022* without amendment.

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

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

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill 104 and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 104 — *The Local Improvements Amendment Act, 2022*

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I move that the bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister the bill be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — Third reading.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Chair of Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Ms. Ritchie: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 105, *The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 2022* without amendment.

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

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

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 105 and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[11:00]

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 105 — *The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 2022*

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that the bill be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — Third reading.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Coverage for Prescription Contraceptives

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to participate in today's debate on behalf of the official opposition, as our critic for Status of Women and human rights, to further our call for the Sask Party government to make universal birth control a reality for the people of our province.

Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of my comments, I will be moving the following motion:

That the Assembly call upon the government to introduce universal no-cost contraception in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as the official opposition, we have been calling for universal prescription birth control to be implemented here in Saskatchewan since 2019. And we launched a petition alongside Saskatoon Sexual Health over a year ago now, and have been tabling petitions on an ongoing basis here in this Chamber for over that past year, petitions that have been enthusiastically endorsed by hundreds of people across our province.

And so it is with great frustration that, four years later, we have failed to see any form of leadership whatsoever from the Sask Party government in taking up this call on behalf of Saskatchewan people, especially the women of our province, Mr. Speaker, who make up over half of our province's population. And we are also taking up this call on behalf of nonbinary and transgender people in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, barrier-free access to birth control is a human right, and it's essential to promoting bodily autonomy. Yet cost remains one of the most significant barriers to accessing birth control in our province. Women across our province should never be faced with making the choice between buying groceries or being able to refill their birth control prescription, Mr. Speaker.

Choices like this are becoming increasingly common, and more and more women are bearing these costs as the cost of living has skyrocketed and remains incredibly high here in our province. And, Mr. Speaker, when people are forced to make decisions about what they have to cut from their budget, when they don't have enough money to cover the most basic of necessities, if they have to pick between groceries and birth control, birth control is going to be the thing that's going to be sacrificed, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is, the financial burden of prescription birth control is forcing women to opt for cheaper and less effective methods of contraception or even worse, it is forcing them to forgo contraception altogether.

Particularly in a province that has some of the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy in the entire country, Mr. Speaker, which is sadly the case here in Saskatchewan, you would think the Sask Party government would be open to proactively looking at solutions. You would think that this Health minister and his government would be eager to consider evidence-based measures that would address this troubling reality.

Saskatchewan people have an expectation that their government will listen to experts and that their government will adopt evidence-based solutions here in our province. Universal access to birth control is an evidence-based solution, Mr. Speaker, and it has been endorsed by medical experts across Canada and across our province alike.

There's no need to take it from the opposition, Mr. Speaker. This is a call that is strongly supported by medical experts, including the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada as well as the Canadian Paediatric Society. And it is also a call that both doctors and medical students alike have taken up locally here in Saskatchewan.

Four years ago, in 2019, Dr. Christine Lett, who is the Regina-area department lead of obstetrics and gynecology, wrote to the Sask Party government's Minister of Health. Dr. Lett wrote to the minister to outline the benefits that would be realized from implementing universal birth control in Saskatchewan, such as improved health equity, a sevenfold return on investment, and fewer unintended pregnancies. The benefits also include, Mr. Speaker, increased uptake of effective contraceptive methods as well as achieving the World Health Organization's target for reproductive health care services.

Mr. Speaker, that minister's response to Dr. Lett indicated no interest whatsoever in what the minister at that time referred to as "her views."

These are not views, Mr. Speaker. These are facts. And here we are four years later, and the current Sask Party government's Minister of Health has that very same aversion, Mr. Speaker, the very same aversion to acknowledging the facts, which speak to the clear, across-the-board benefits of universal birth control.

Just last week we had the pleasure of being joined here in this Chamber by a group of University of Saskatchewan medical students who have founded the Universal Access to Contraception Saskatchewan campaign. These medical students were here to join the call for universal birth control and to launch their open letter to the Sask Party government calling for this coverage immediately. As has been outlined in their letter, and as the Health minister has been made well aware, an estimated 40 per cent of pregnancies in Canada are unplanned, Mr. Speaker — four-zero.

There's a serious cost to this, Mr. Speaker. Unintended pregnancies and the outcome of these pregnancies have been shown to be associated with delayed prenatal care. They've been known to be associated with, as well, an increased reliance on

social programs which is highly costly. They've been associated with decreased earning potential for women and lasting generational poverty for women and their families.

The letter from medical students also highlighted the fact that a live birth in our province costs approximately \$8,000. Let's extrapolate that statistic, Mr. Speaker, that an estimated 40 per cent of pregnancies in Canada are unplanned and multiply each of those births by \$8,000. That is a significant and unnecessary cost to our already overburdened health care system.

Covering the cost of contraceptives will actually save our government money, Mr. Speaker. It has been demonstrated that for every dollar spent by governments on family planning, the government will save \$7, a sevenfold cost saving, Mr. Speaker. The return on investment is outstanding. Based on the data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the cost of a single delivery — and that's assuming that delivery happens without any complications, Mr. Speaker — that cost would cover a year's worth of contraception for 33 women.

I'm going to read out the call to action from Universal Access to Contraception Saskatchewan's open letter to this government, Mr. Speaker. I think every member in this House should hear this call to action:

The increasing cost of living in our province has exacerbated inequitable access to contraception and therefore limited patients' fundamental right to health care. The ability for individuals to make informed and unrestricted decisions about their reproductive health is contingent on cost not being a prohibitive factor.

Our population, especially marginalized groups in our communities, are being forced to navigate the real and detrimental consequences of unplanned pregnancies. Additionally individuals with common medical conditions that are managed with contraception are deprived of basic access to necessary treatment.

Widespread access to prescription contraception is a proactive and revenue-positive solution that is in the best interest of our citizens and our province as a whole. We call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately implement universal coverage of all prescription contraception. It is the right choice from a medical, financial, and most importantly, deeply human standpoint.

This is their call to action, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, we saw universal birth control implemented by the Government of British Columbia just earlier this month on April 1st. And we applaud the BC government for showing leadership and for understanding that this measure will not only help the people of their province but it will save considerable money for their government.

Mr. Speaker, estimates out of British Columbia indicate that the province will achieve cost neutrality in just two years. And by the fourth year of implementation, BC is expected to reach savings of 27 million annually as a result of their universal birth control program. That's significant.

Mr. Speaker, we can see very clearly that universal birth control

is a win-win-win policy solution. It allows those who are able to become pregnant to have autonomy over their reproductive choices, it saves women money, and it will save this government plenty of money as well, Mr. Speaker.

So the question then is, what is not to like, Mr. Speaker? Where exactly is this government's objection to such a policy? It's curious.

In a recent column that has been published in the *Regina Leader-Post*, it is suggested that the Sask Party government's unwillingness to implement universal birth control may be attributed to good old-fashioned social conservatism, Mr. Speaker, rather than any sort of evidenced-based rationale.

And this simply, I'm sad to say, it would not be a surprise, Mr. Speaker, when you take even a cursory look at the views of the Premier and many of his MLAs when it comes to women having autonomy over their reproductive health. The Premier himself has publicly declared that he is anti-choice when it comes to a woman's right to abortion. He was endorsed by an anti-abortion group when he ran to become the Premier of Saskatchewan. The hardline anti-choice group RightNow sold hundreds of Sask Party memberships to see that he was elected in this province. And just last year when our Justice critic called on Premier Moe to clarify his government's stance on abortion, he refused to answer. His silence speaks volumes, Mr. Speaker.

Many of the Premier's MLAs are also publicly anti-choice when it comes to abortion, Mr. Speaker, including the Health minister himself who has described himself as pro-life.

So one is left to wonder if these anti-choice sentiments extend beyond abortion to birth control as well, Mr. Speaker. Does the Premier also believe medications that prevent pregnancy are morally problematic? Or will he remain silent on this question too?

And what about the Health minister, Mr. Speaker? When asked by media, he stated . . .

An Hon. Member: — When did I ever say that?

Ms. Bowes: — He stated . . . You said that in 2011. That's what you said in 2011.

The Deputy Speaker: — Through the Chair.

Ms. Bowes: — Mr. Speaker, what the Health minister, when he was asked by media, when he was asked, he stated that his government has no plans to change its coverage model to include universal prescription birth control.

Here's what he had to say to CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] earlier this month, Mr. Speaker: "We're content with where we are right now. Just because one province is looking at one program doesn't mean that all provinces are going to do that."

Is that the best response he can muster up, Mr. Speaker? Does he have no real counter-arguments to offer? And if not, then I think the people of this province deserve an explanation from the Health minister as to why he refuses to consider this evidence-

based policy solution.

He was appointed to his role to lead and to advance health solutions for the people of this province, and here he is chirping from his seat instead of exploring those solutions for the people of this province. So why, Mr. Speaker, why is he chirping from his seat and why is he refusing to explore this solution when it comes to advancing women's reproductive health?

This is a serious question, Mr. Speaker, and it deserves a serious answer. Saskatchewan women deserve a straightforward explanation from this Health minister. They simply aren't buying his complete absence of an argument as to why his government is not considering this policy solution.

Even the Minister for the Status of Women will not weigh in on this crucial issue for the women of our province, Mr. Speaker. On the same day that doctors and medical students came here to this legislature to demand action from the Sask Party government around universal coverage for birth control, the Minister for the Status of Women refused to commit her support for this call.

In estimates committee I specifically asked the minister if she would take the lead in her role and commit to pushing the government through the Status of Women office to make this policy solution a reality for Saskatchewan women. Instead, that minister opted to defer a hundred per cent to the Minister of Health, claiming that the issue is not within her purview, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, if simply promoting barrier-free access to reproductive autonomy for women is not within the purview of the Minister for the Status of Women, then I guess it's no wonder that women in this province can't count on this government to support them.

I will be waiting with bated breath to hear the entries into today's debate from the members opposite here today, Mr. Speaker. Will we see leadership from the members on the opposite side, or will they continue to toe the line of this socially conservative Sask Party government. Will they continue to toe that line? And will they keep their mouths shut for fear of angering their base in this province instead of standing up for the vast majority of people who have said loud and clear for years, over and over, Mr. Speaker, that they support a woman's right to choose. They support a woman's right to have bodily autonomy, and that they expect their government to uphold those rights and not just to quietly uphold the bare minimum, but to advance, proactively advance rights for women in Saskatchewan.

[11:15]

We have so many areas, Mr. Speaker, where this government is failing to get the job done for women. We have no pay equity legislation. We have the highest rates of domestic violence in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker. We have a \$5-an-hour gender pay gap here, which again when I asked, there's no answers to these questions and so reproductive rights need to be accomplished.

I will move the following motion:

That the Assembly call . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the . . . I believe she mentioned the motion at the start of the speech that she would be

. . . She moved the motion, so I will . . .

It has been moved by the member from Saskatoon University that the . . . Order. The Chair is in charge here and I'll stay in charge, please.

It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon University:

That the Assembly calls upon the government to introduce universal no-cost coverage of prescription contraceptives for people living in Saskatchewan.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Ms. A. Ross: — It is my pleasure to rise in this House today to speak to the motion put forward by the member from Saskatoon University.

Our government has shown over and over again that the health and well-being of all people in Saskatchewan is top and utmost priority with record investments in health care year after year.

This year's budget has dedicated a record-setting \$6.9 billion to health care funding, over double that of the previous NDP government. Initiatives such as investment into our health human resource action plan is a top priority and supports increased access to health care to all residents across the province.

On April 1st of this year our government enhanced the rural physician incentive plan to attract and retain more family physicians in the rural and remote areas of the province. This plan was initiated by our government in 2013 to incentivize recent grads to practise in rural and northern Saskatchewan, and now has been extended to include physicians in the Saskatchewan international physician practice program. This will improve all health care access to residents in the rural and remote areas of our province.

Expansion of the scope of practice for pharmacists to be able to prescribe medications, including birth control and morning-after medication will also improve access for women who are unable to see a health care practitioner in their community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are fortunate to live in a province with a provincial drug plan. The Saskatchewan drug plan is one of the most comprehensive drug plans in Canada with over 5,600 medications listed in the Saskatchewan formulary. Mr. Speaker, that is 44 per cent more medications available at reduced costs to Saskatchewan residents than when the Saskatchewan Party formed government in 2007.

Many of these medications added since we formed government are life-altering for those who need them. In our latest budget, the drug plan portion of the health care budget is nearly \$400 million. That's an increase of nearly \$145 million to the drug plan funding since coming into office in 2007.

Mr. Speaker, some residents of Saskatchewan faced extraordinarily high drug costs in order to just survive, or in some cases, extend their lives. Drugs like Trikafta for the treatment of cystic fibrosis give those suffering from such life-threatening disease a better quality of life.

Cystic fibrosis is an inherited life-threatening disease that changes the body's electrolyte transport system which causes cells to absorb too much sodium and water. This causes a thick, sticky mucus that clogs the patient's respiratory system and leads to many lung infections that progressively worsen over time. Without treatment, quality of life and life expectancy is greatly diminished.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I was in university, one of my profs had a niece with cystic fibrosis and she would share stories of her life. She was a brilliant, young woman struggling and battling this disease. And through all of this, she managed to get a university degree while she waited for a double-lung transplant. But sadly she passed away before she was able to receive it.

Our government also provides funding for medication for treatments of spinal muscular atrophy, but yet another debilitating genetic disorder for which there is no cure and is life-limiting and -ending. This government has provided millions of dollars annually to support people with this disease.

To date since 2018 our government has provided over \$160 million to cover antiretroviral therapies for HIV/AIDS [human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome]. Without government support these therapies would cost the patients over \$15,000 annually. This treatment is essential and is cost prohibitive for most patients with this disease.

When I worked as a nurse in home care, we had a little guy, he was six years old, who was born with HIV, and the treatment he received allowed him to go to school, play in the park, and have that special time with his family that he wouldn't have had without the medications.

These are just examples of the life-saving medications this government provides to improve and extend life for patients who, without access to these life-changing drugs and government support, would not have been able to live the quality of life they have. Improving access to life-changing drugs for those suffering with debilitating or life-ending disease is and will remain an important focus and top priority of our government.

Other programs such as the special support program is a program designed to help eligible residents with their drug costs in relation to their income. Residents and families who receive guaranteed income supplement, GIS, the seniors' income plan, or family health benefits may also apply. Women who are on the SAID and SIS [Saskatchewan income support] programs may be eligible for the female contraceptive devices, with prior approval from the minister. Eligible seniors in Saskatchewan pay a maximum of \$25 per prescription drugs if you are 65 or older and a resident of the province.

Residents who have a terminal illness and whose life expectancy is measured in months and who do not have appropriate treatment to maintain their quality of life, including managing pain for symptoms, for pain, nausea, and stress are eligible to apply to the ministry for support. These medications create opportunities for patients to spend better quality of time with families and loved ones when they are in the final stages of life. These are just a few examples of ways our government supports the health care needs of the people in Saskatchewan, and I am sure my colleagues will

have many more examples.

For those people who are fortunate enough to have employee or spousal benefit plans in the workplace, women of child-bearing age will have eligibility as either an employee or a spouse or partner. If a province has a pharmacare or drug program, benefit insurance providers look at government as first-party payer. Their beneficiaries are required to register for all available government coverage programs or risk having their benefits cut off.

Universal coverage of contraceptives or any other medications results in private insurance companies and benefit providers offloading their beneficiaries onto government programs. The government will essentially end up footing the bill for the majority of the women in the province if this was a bill to pass, thus benefiting the private insurance companies and benefits providers who would profit from the government taking on a cost that they should already be covering.

There are affordable birth control options available in Saskatchewan. The Ministry of Health funds several sexual health clinics in Saskatchewan including one in my community. This clinic provides a multitude of services such as education, pregnancy testing, and free condoms to promote safe birth control. Multiple community-based organization partners also provide counselling services including inexpensive birth control options.

Those women who have not filed a tax return to allow them to apply for provincial benefits can often receive sample birth control pills from their physicians to give them the time they need to meet with a budget counsellor so they can submit their income tax to be able to apply for subsidy to cover all or a portion that may be . . . of prescription drugs. They may be added to the benefits of qualifying for program rebates upon submission.

Mr. Speaker, as government we are in a position of prioritizing and making decisions that will benefit all people in our province, and these decisions are never easy. Thank you for the time today.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre.

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — miigwech, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I first would like to redirect this debate to the contraceptives debate, back to the motion. And also I just want to say how pleased I am to participate in this debate, supporting my colleague's motion calling on this government to introduce universal no-cost coverage of the prescription contraceptives for people living in Saskatchewan.

You know, my colleague has spent a lot of time as the critic for Status of Women, speaking with stakeholders out there, and has been a very big advocate when it comes to women issues and supporting women here in our province. Last week she was joined by the medical students calling on this government to make this prescription birth control free.

You know, as legislators serving the people of this province, we must stop creating those barriers when it comes to our health, especially when it comes to women's issues. We should, as women, have a choice of when we're going to have children. We

should. It is often, far too many times, men making those decisions for us. And at this time, where there's a high cost of . . . cost-of-living crisis that we're living today, it's even more important to remove those barriers.

Now when I think about this topic and about access to free contraceptives, I think about working in my own . . . when I worked in the health sector, looking at my own experience working with those that are most impacted by the ineffective health care and also not being able to access health services in a timely way. It was always . . . And we have great programs. We have great staff out there carrying out these services. But when it comes to accessing services that would help them to . . . give them the capacity to make the choices for themselves and their families, it's important that we have these things available for them.

And not everyone has coverage, third-party coverage. And also, like my colleague said earlier about the high cost of living and the cost of our utility bills, the cost of food, the cost of gas, the cost of housing, rent, all of that, the last thing sometimes that we choose . . . Do we choose to pay our rent? Do we choose to put food on the table? The last things sometimes are things that don't get covered, stuff like, you know, contraceptives.

[11:30]

And I know that education programs we know that are offered in health to enable those to make choices for themselves, to promote their health, that are some things . . . sometimes they're ineffective. Like I know there's condoms that are available, right, and we know that does not work. We know that. And maybe this isn't the place to say it, but not all men like to wear condoms. It's uncomfortable for them. And also some of those condoms we know break. So how effective is that?

We need to give that ability to women of child-bearing years. How many, I do not know. How many 65-year-old women are child-bearing? So when the member before talked about 65-year-olds, I'm like, wow. Don't know how many, if there's anyone, that is a 65-year-old woman that can bear a child . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Exactly. Maybe adoption would be the way.

And we know that in Saskatchewan we have high teen pregnancies in this province alone, and I am one of those statistics. I had my baby when I was a teen mom, a teen parent, a teenager. I am grateful I had my baby. I do not regret it. Would I probably, perhaps would have been grateful for a choice to have access to birth control when I was young?

But I lived in a rural community, you know, and getting to the hospital, getting to the doctor, seeing somebody, to ask for that, it didn't happen. And as young people or those that are in lust don't often think ahead, and I was one of those. But it would have been really good to be able to have that choice. You know, it was only later in life as a middle-aged woman that I went back to school to complete my education.

We know that the statistics say, 40 per cent of unplanned pregnancies . . . It is important that we listen to the experts — the experts, the medical experts — and when they're recommending us as legislators to do something for the larger population, we must act. We must do that. We have many, many great programs

that are available out there, but we need to make that a choice for women to decide, not men, not us, not legislators — in particular men. It is the women. We need to give that choice back to the women. They decide when they're going to have a baby, and we should not be creating barriers for that.

And we talk about . . . I know the member before was talking about the access to physicians, health care practitioners. We know for years, for years that physician retention, access to health has always been a challenge. It is still a challenge today. As a privileged member in this Chamber, I do not have a family doctor. So it doesn't matter what class we're in, access to health care is not available, so we need to stop creating those barriers. We need to stop saying, well look at all what we're doing, and forget about those.

What can we do to protect those that are most vulnerable, those that do not have the means to access prescription birth control? We have to stop creating those barriers. And I am grateful and honoured to be serving with women on this side that actually have a pulse of the communities they represent and that have been vocal about empowering and giving women the right to choose. No man has that right to say to me as a woman, to decide on what I want.

So we have to also remember to listen to evidence-based solutions. So I am supporting my colleague's motion that she's presented today. And I would hope that the others would stay on the topic of what we're here today to discuss, not about health. That could be another time if they choose to decide to do that, but today we're talking about access to prescription contraceptives for the people in this province — free access.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

Mr. Friesen: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's a pleasure always to stand up in this House and debate. I would like to say a few things to the member from Saskatoon Centre. I don't think she really heard the whole context of my colleague from Prince Albert Northcote, what she was doing with her speech. And I think if you actually listened to the overall comments, you would not be talking about 65-year-old people needing condoms. I'm not sure where she went with that.

But, Mr. Speaker, really the point is that if you look at what government does overall, what we have tried to do, our spending is over \$7 billion. And you know, in this House it's been talked about many times. And I think we cannot forget the importance of that number, of what that is providing and what that is all encompassing. And I know the member from Melfort has said this very eloquently. And it is \$7 billion. We cannot take that number lightly, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And you know, we talk about speaking with people and engagement in our communities. And that is one thing that us on this side of the House are very proud of, the engagement that we do in our communities. It is one of the most important things, whether it's through our CAs, our constituency assistants, which comes directly to us as members; whether it's out in the community, which happens many times. In fact I have three community cleanups coming up here again very soon, and it's an absolute pleasure to be part of those community cleanups and

talking to the constituents.

This is where we have discussions on issues such as this, on many issues. But absolutely this is an issue that we have discussions on in the community level. And I think it's very important that we do that. It's the discussions that we have with our own doctors, our own people that look after us, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And you know, we are very fortunate on this side of the House to have MLAs from corner to corner in this province, covering all corners of the province and covering the centre of the province, covering in the cities, in the small towns. We are very fortunate, and we recognize that on this side of the House. And we remember the people that put us in our seats here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's very important that we listen to those voices carefully and that we make sure that they are heard at the government level.

And I'm very proud that, you know, we've been given the honour to serve. Certainly myself, but I know members on this side of the House are extremely proud that we are given the honour to serve.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've had an interesting, different amount of committees that I've sat on since I've been elected. Public Accounts was one where we can actually look into the ministries and where the money is spent. More recently into Human Services, and this has been a great new committee to be part of, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I believe yourself, you sit on the committee as well.

And it's one where community-based organizations, individuals, groups are able to come and bring things to our table, you know. And really the process from there, it happens with many of the drugs that my colleague from Prince Albert Northcote spoke about. They come forward to committee. We discuss them. We learn about them, and we actually build a report and talk to the ministry about it. This is how the process works.

We had the pleasure . . . I'm not sure exactly where it was, how long ago it was, but it was fairly recently. The Canadian Federation of Medical Students came into the Human Services group, and it was great talking to these individuals about, you know, concerns on this end. And it is something that we definitely look into and that we also provide services for right now.

We do have one of the most aggressive drug plans in the country, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we will be proud of that. We will not talk badly about, or be negative about — which seems to be the way it is most of the time on that side of the House — but not be negative about the money that we spend in this province.

And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lot of these things, there's a lengthy process to understand where the money can be spent. And certainly some of the things that our ministry looks at and our caucus looks at is that people, their life-changing, life-saving medications are being provided. So again to the comments about my colleague from Prince Albert Northcote, you know, there is so many good programs that our ministry has put in place. In fact the Saskatchewan drug plan budget for 2023-24 is 388.6 million.

Before I get some heckling from the other side, I am going to

circle back to where they think we're not going, but we are actually absolutely talking about the contraception. And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, part of the consultation is been happening and happens on a regular basis as well as our health ministers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have travelled to many, many communities in our province. They're speaking with nurses. They're speaking with nurse and doctor groups on a regular basis. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the important conversations that we believe is a major priority and we want to stay engaged with our community, with our doctors, with our nurses, our health practitioners, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is one of the most important things and that is something we take great pride in doing.

There's a few avenues that we have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of funding some of the contraceptions that are funded right now. They actually come through a number of the ministries, certainly the Ministry of Health as well as the Ministry of Social Services. And there is a process for this, Mr. Speaker, and some of this flows through our CBOs [community-based organization].

And just for a minute, I'd like to say that we have great CBOs. I know in my constituency I have amazing CBOs that do incredible work with people struggling in different ways. Whatever it is — mental health or if this is one of the concerns, that they need contraception — this is something that our CBOs do an amazing job of.

[11:45]

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in just in that alone there's over 900,000 of funding to different community-based organizations. And they provide sexual health education and counselling, which is also a very important part of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and also distribute safe sex supplies and better connect our patients with community setting. So very important pieces as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Certainly the contraception for people that need it is very important, and we actually have plans in place for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Contraception such as condoms and others are available at no cost from several of these community-based organizations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we encourage every woman to work with their health care team to ensure that they have all the information and options needed to make informed decisions about their care. And we can't leave that out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because that is a very important part of this discussion, and those conversations need to be ongoing.

New drugs are added to the Saskatchewan formulary based on advice received from the national and provincial drug review process in conjunction with pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance negotiations. So there is a process to how this works, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we are following that process, first by listening to the people we speak with; second by coming through the Human Services Committee; and then it's passed through our ministers, Mr. Speaker. So thank you for your time.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honestly very disappointed to be having to engage in this debate today in 2023 in what is a wealthy country. This is not even a debate that we

should be having to participate in. But of course this issue is of utmost importance, and I will treat it with its due respect by staying on topic and talking about the matter at hand here, Mr. Speaker. And I think it probably goes without saying, but I'm absolutely supportive of the motion brought forward by my colleague.

When I was a young woman coming from a working family, it was impressed upon me quite early that education was my ticket out. It was my ticket to social mobility, and that an unwanted pregnancy would prevent me from getting that education. You know, my folks always said, if you leave university, you're never going to go back. That was just a belief they had. And so it was always something that I carried with me, that it was important for me to get an education first before planning a family, if I wanted to do so.

And my folks didn't have a drug plan at work, and they worked my whole life. We've never been on assistance. So you know, the member is talking about how some folks who are on assistance would have access to birth control. Well that's not at all the position that we were in when I was a young woman. And I remember quite vividly, even through university, paying \$60 every two months for oral contraceptives. And this was a really big deal for me as a university student. It was something I had to budget in, something I had to prioritize because, contrary to what the members opposite might believe, we can also have autonomy for our own bodies, and we don't need to leave it up to men to use condoms. And we know that IUDs [intrauterine device], hormonal birth control, these things cost even more, Mr. Speaker.

When we talk about the cost-of-living crisis that we are in today, the increased tuition pressures, I cannot even imagine what young people are having to deal with when they are making this call, Mr. Speaker. And I find it completely offensive that the members opposite talk about all the drugs they fund. Why isn't birth control on that list, Mr. Speaker? It's not the brag they think it is to talk about all of the drugs that are on that list.

As a starting point, I think every person in this Chamber would agree that we want to avoid unwanted teenage pregnancies. There's a moral imperative here. But for me, it's also about social, emotional, and economic costs. Lives are drastically affected every year because of cost barriers.

So when we can be taking an approach that saves money, that's preventative, that offers 50 per cent, maybe 51 per cent of the population now, autonomy and independence, what is the holdup, Mr. Speaker? It's this government. And we'll talk a little bit about their terrible record on women's health and reproductive rights.

Let's review just the last five years, Mr. Speaker, when I've physically been here. I didn't even have to do any external research for this, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to pharmacare, the federal government, the Liberal government made it a signature election promise. They walked back on that promise. And despite the growing cost of drugs in Saskatchewan each year — which for some reason these folks are bragging about — and repeated calls for a fully funded national pharmacare program, the Sask Party government continues to let people fall through the cracks. As one of the most common prescriptions, birth control would already be covered if this government had acted sooner to hold

the federal government accountable and to bring in pharmacare.

When it comes to obstetrical care, women have been told to plan their births for years in this province. The We Want Birth committee in Flin Flon, our Creighton, Saskatchewan residents just asking for the right to be able to give birth, Mr. Speaker. This was in 2018. They were told they had to travel weeks in advance to plan out their birth or pay thousands in ambulance costs, hoping you're going to make it to the hospital hours away.

In Meadow Lake, Kendal Carlberg gave birth on the side of the road. There are still issues with ongoing closures in this community. And the Saskatchewan government is not taking action to ensure that epidurals are available during an international shortage, Mr. Speaker. They're really showing women how they feel about their reproductive health. And in Yorkton three months ago, Tara Luce gave birth on the floor of a townhouse. Mr. Speaker, all of these things are unacceptable. All of these were very top of mind for me in thinking about this Sask Party's record.

And when it comes to abortion, the Sask Party government is not working to ensure access to abortion. And in fact, several cabinet ministers are anti-choice. The Premier received support from the anti-choice group RightNow during his leadership that boasted about the fact that they made him the Premier of this province, Mr. Speaker. We have a Minister of Justice who has publicly stated that she is anti-choice, you know, the person that's at the centre of law-making in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And we have a Minister of Health who has said, "We're satisfied with the programs we have right now." Mr. Speaker, this is in the last week or week and a half here. This was Global News, April 16th. On April 12th, "We're content with where we are right now." Mr. Speaker, that Health minister is content with where we are right now. And then, "We're not having any active discussions on that. We are not having any active discussions on that." Also on April 12th. And then he went on to talk about condoms, Mr. Speaker. Incredibly out of touch.

I was the Health critic in 2019 when we fought to get full coverage of Mifegymiso, which is medical abortion, covered by this government. At the time they had to be dragged kicking and screaming into funding Mifegymiso. The member for Yorkton encouraged . . . He spoke with an anti-abortion group in his constituency of Yorkton. He was the minister for Rural and Remote Health at the time, and he said that he would, he encouraged them that he would continue their battle. And he told this anti-choice gathering, "I will continue to do what I can in my professional capacity." This isn't about personal beliefs, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about people that are standing up in a public forum indicating that this is what they will fight for.

So, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the contrast between ourselves and the members opposite. The contrast with this side of the House, a team of majority women, fierce women who are fighting for reproductive rights in this province. We've been calling for universal birth control, I think the first time was maybe 2019 where we started to advocate for this. We've been advocating for women's issues on this side of the House. We've applauded the BC government for making this a reality, and we are here to highlight the fact that contraception is health care. Access reduces the number of abortions — this has been

documented in Quebec — and it reduces the number of unwanted pregnancies.

And, Mr. Speaker, we know that people are speaking out about these issues. There are a number of articles that have come forward by the public to show support. There is a group that has been formed, the Universal Access to Contraception Saskatchewan. There is an op-ed that's been written by teams of advocates. We've had medical students, we've had doctors, come and join with us at the Assembly here to show their support. And this isn't anything new. Back in 2019 the Canadian Paediatric Society gave a . . . was advocating for free access to birth control for all those under 25 years old.

Of course we know that there are significant cost savings to be found here, Mr. Speaker. And in addition to the individual cost, we have to talk about system-wide cost, the cost of delivering abortions, the cost of having people, single parents who are on assistance, Mr. Speaker — all of these things. We know that keeping women in the workforce, allowing them to have their own autonomy, is a key piece to this puzzle. And in a province as wealthy as ours, in a province where, you know, we are incredibly lucky, this is absolutely something we should have, as other jurisdictions have that enjoy wealth and quality of life. Thank you.

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

Mr. Lemaigre: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I welcome this debate to discuss sexual health education and on contraception and the cost of it, and what that should like for this province. I think all of us can agree sexual health education is extremely important and that it's encouraged conversations to be had with health professionals.

When growing up, I had a household of sisters. And on occasion we'd get together and I'd listen to my mom and her sisters talk about sexual health when they were younger. And it's quite a frank conversation that was had, and there was a discussion surrounding what options they would have had when they were young.

And fast forward to what we have now and what we're able to offer. My aunties would say: we had nothing; we had nothing; we didn't have anything. And so now when you have these discussions, there's more information available. There's more health measures to be taken, and this is a different discussion that's had today.

Our Ministry of Health contributes \$900,000 to fund five community-based organizations. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these community-based organization is critical in sexual education and sexual health education. And they take on the task of counselling, that proper information is shared, so they can make informed decisions. Now that's something that we offer to community-based organizations. And these community-based organizations play a critical part in supplying and distributing safer sex supplies and develop connections with patients at a community setting. That makes a world of difference when you want to be informed and make decisions, not like the time when my mother was younger.

[12:00]

In Saskatchewan individuals pay for contraceptives according to their coverage payment and/or deductible. And I heard being said that not everybody has that. And I can say that's fair. Not everybody has access to that. But if you're on assistance . . . So people on income assistance are eligible to receive listed contraceptives at \$2 or no cost depending on eligibility. As those under 18 years of age who are eligible for coverage under the family health benefits program, that means they have access to it. That means that they tend to be informed and get what is needed for them to make an informed decision.

I also heard about the usage of condoms and that it is just the men that make those decisions. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think in today's world that's a joint, informed decision based on education that we provide, that both a couple can make a decision like this. And I think we cannot go past that and make blatant statements that that is not happening, because I think in today's world and in today's education opportunities that is there and that we shouldn't take that for granted.

Recently we had the medical students, medical doctors here to give us information. And I think that is welcome because that becomes part of our discussion. And so we welcome their advocacy. I don't think any of the ministers denied any meetings with them and that is an indication that discussions and information is welcome here.

I sat in some of their meetings on other initiatives the medical doctors are taking on. So these are informed information that they're giving us and we welcome that. And advocacy is all part of making a change and if this is what they are doing, then it is welcome.

Mr. Speaker, something that we also offer on this side of government is the life-saving drugs that we offer. And that also comes through by way of debate, by way of discussions.

And so that leads us to what we're talking about today and how we could introduce that to our drug plan. And this is not a message of denying women's rights. This is not a message of a social stance. This is a position of how can we get through this. We have over 5,600 drugs on our drug plan and some of that is life-saving drugs. Some of that is based on advocacy, some of it based on information. So eventually drugs do get on the plan. In this province for the '23-24 budget year we have \$388.6 million invested in subsidizing the drug costs for Saskatchewan people. That is significant investment into our health care.

We encourage every woman to work with their health care team to ensure they all have the information and options needed to make an informed decision about their care. And when we talk about health care, I grew up on a First Nations. And we always had a nurse; we could go to a nurse. That's a health care professional that could guide us and give us information on our health care questions.

And we have hospitals that offer the same care, and we have clinics throughout the province that, if we had questions about our health care, it would be able to be answered. And women's health care is no different. There are health care professionals that are available that could answer these questions.

So we have programs that are available if there are challenges. We have information through community-based organizations if you want information. And we also have a significant drug plan that, you know . . . 5,600 drugs on there that contributes to well-being, extending life care. All of these are all part of Saskatchewan. We are proud of what we contribute. And when it comes down to information, we rely on partnerships of our community-based organizations to deliver these . . . critical information.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, yes, we do have a long way to go. But when it comes down to women's health care, we're taking it very seriously. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The 65-minute period has expired. The 10-minute question-and-answer period will begin. I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Ms. C. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the member from Saskatoon Centre: if implemented, what would the member suggest be removed from the list of covered drugs to compensate for this added expense? Cystic fibrosis drugs or cancer medications?

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Oh, I think birth control should be covered in those list of plans because it does help with women with menstrual control, with endometriosis, the pain, so it does help. So I think you guys should be covering that.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the member for Prince Albert Northcote understand that birth control is significantly cheaper for the taxpayer than abortions, prenatal care, and childbirth, as a nurse?

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

Ms. A. Ross: — I thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker. It's not a message of denying women's rights. As a government we are in a position of prioritizing and making decisions that will benefit all people in our province, and these decisions are never easy, Mr. Speaker. Improving access to life-changing drugs for those suffering with debilitating or life-ending disease is and will continue to remain an important focus and a top priority for our government. Thank you.

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

Mr. Goudy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member from Saskatoon University: universal access to contraceptives and universal subsidy are two different things. Do you believe in increasing taxation for everyone to pay for a universal subsidy that would not necessarily lead to universal access?

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you for the question. I wish that the member opposite had been paying attention to my remarks where I very clearly stated that there are substantial outstanding cost savings to implementing a program such as this, a sevenfold return on investment. So I hope that answers the member's question.

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — To the member from Saskatoon Riversdale: do you understand better than the doctors and medical students on how effective condoms are at preventing pregnancy?

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

Mr. Friesen: — Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I actually reject the premise of that question. We speak with doctors, nurses. We consult with people. That's what we do. I am not a doctor, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So that is why our consultations on this side of the House are so important. That's why we have committees like Human Services, where we talk to these people that are actually bringing these issues forward and their concerns forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will continue on this side of the House to listen to the doctors, to the nurses, to the health care people, and certainly to the residents of this great province. Thank you.

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

Ms. Lambert: — To the member from Saskatoon University: is it your party's position that taxpayer dollars should replace the role of private insurance? And if so, how would your party pay for this increase in spending?

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

Ms. Bowes: — Again, Mr. Speaker, to this member opposite, my answer is the same. And I wish that she too had been listening and had been listening to my answer that I just delivered saying that there is a sevenfold return on investment, meaning that you will make money, you will save money on a program like this. It is not a cost to the taxpayers. So thank you.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, all the members opposite today discussed the life-saving drugs that they fund. Do they understand that unwanted pregnancy can also be life-altering? Does the member for Riversdale agree that a pregnancy is life-altering?

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

Mr. Friesen: — Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I think we could rephrase the way that is. I mean pregnancy is

ultimately life-giving. Obviously pregnancy is life-changing. It is one of the greatest things that happened in my life. My beautiful daughter was here today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as attest to that.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have one of the most comprehensive drug plans in the country, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think we're forgetting about this. So I'm very proud of the things that we do in this side of the House. Thank you.

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

Mr. D. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the member from Saskatoon Centre: will you acknowledge that the significant investments made by our government each and every year have resulted in Saskatchewan having the best prescription drug coverage plan in the entire Dominion of Canada?

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Well I do recognize, acknowledge the high teenage pregnancy in this province here, and also how birth control helps with women's health.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the member for Prince Albert Northcote have any actual financial argument against a system that will more than pay for itself? Or does she just not like the thought of people being in charge of their own bodies?

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

Ms. A. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Improving access to life-changing drugs is something that's very important to our government. And also for . . . In Saskatchewan many birth control options exist in this province and we strongly support, encourage all women to work with their health care providers to determine which method would be best for them. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This motion calls for no-cost prescription contraceptives for people living in Saskatchewan. Obviously there is a cost, Mr. Speaker, and it's the people of Saskatchewan that would be paying for it.

The member from Saskatoon Fairview raised the issue of a woman's right to autonomy over her body in her comments. My question to the member from Saskatoon University: can you please explain how the taxpayers of Saskatchewan paying for your contraceptives somehow improves your personal autonomy?

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

Ms. Bowes: — Mr. Speaker, personal autonomy is something that is a human right and so we're again, if we're talking about the taxpayers . . . This program pays for itself, so it becomes cost neutral after two years. We already pay for abortions. This member should know that. That's clearly very public knowledge and as an MLA, it's a bit shameful that he's not aware of that.

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Does the member from Saskatoon Riversdale prefer to put a struggling single mom on decades of social assistance than birth control?

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

[12:15]

Mr. Friesen: — Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And you know, that is an interesting question as well. I mean, certainly I'm not going to make the choice for the person. The Ministry of Social Services, the Ministry of Health provides over \$900,000 in funding to community-based organizations to help. There's also provisions with our doctors, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is through the Health ministry. So we don't make that decision, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We provide solutions. And that's what we are doing on this side of the House.

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

Mr. Jensen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We've heard for weeks and months the opposition running down not only our economy but also our health care system. So it begs a question to the member for Saskatoon University. We've heard in question period all week some rather disturbing information.

Do you believe that doctors and physicians in the province of Saskatchewan should continue working until they're in their 70s and 80s and even into their 90s rather than retiring with dignity and a good quality of life . . .

An Hon. Member: — This is not even on topic.

Mr. Jensen: — Yeah, no it is. It has to do with health care when they're in their 50s and 60s.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

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

Motion No. 2 — Government's Health Human Resources Action Plan

Ms. C. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to move and read into the record the following motion:

That this Assembly supports the four-point health human resources action plan that is assisting in the recruitment,

training, incentivization, and retention of health care workers in the province of Saskatchewan. And that the HHR action plan is showing results in the hiring of internationally and domestically educated health care workers who will support a strong provincial health care system into the future.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Lloydminster:

That this Assembly supports the four-point health human resources action plan that is assisting in the recruitment, training, incentivization, and retention of health care workers in the province of Saskatchewan. And that the HHR action plan is showing results in the hiring of internationally and domestically educated health care workers who will support a strong, provincial health care system into the future.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Mr. Nerlien: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, recruitment, training incentivizing, and retaining physicians and health care professionals is not a Saskatchewan problem alone right now. It is a worldwide problem. Here in Canada, provinces are intensely competing to attract and retain both GP [general practitioner], specialists, nurses, health care aides, and health care workers of all designations. That is why it's important to have a plan in place to ensure we are taking action on all fronts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm proud to say on this side of the House we do have a plan in place with millions of dollars committed in this year's budget to ensure that this plan works and is successful. I'm happy to report it is working and showing much success.

As many of you know, I have a long line of health care professionals in my household. I do. So I get to hear their concerns, challenges, and how they think these challenges should be addressed. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have in my family registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, doctors, CCAs [continuing care aide], LPNs [licensed practical nurse], and a number of other health care support persons. So I'm always made aware of the issues that they are raising. And the conversations are quite lively and very interesting in terms of the potential solutions that are proposed.

But I will say that it's interesting on our side of the House that we're taking the positive actions necessary to improve our health care system, unlike the constant negativity and badmouthing the opposition, who continue to espouse us in this Assembly and into the public about our health care system.

Before I share the actions and solutions that we are taking to better health care for the people of Saskatchewan now and for the future, I just want to say a few things just didn't start or come up with this action this year. We on this side of the House created and started in 2009 saskdocs, a recruitment strategy for the province which became operational in 2010 and has been ongoing. This agency focused on recruitment of doctors and posting of available positions across the province. The agency has since grown into a recruitment and posting for other health care providers.

Along with this we implemented SIPPA, the Saskatchewan international physician practice assessment program, in 2011. This is a practice, readiness, competency assessment program. It is to ensure that internationally trained physicians who wish to practise medicine in Saskatchewan possess the appropriate clinical skills and knowledge to provide quality patient care. There are two to three intakes offered a year with many more international medical graduate physician applicants than are available spots.

We have seen great success with our SIPPA programs — 278 internationally trained family physicians are currently working in the province as a result of SIPPA. The vast majority, 77 per cent, are practising in rural communities. Recently following completion of the program, 15 new physicians are relocated to rural Saskatchewan.

Action from this government to improve our health care system, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is ongoing. Announced in September 2022, our four-point health human resource action plan to recruit, train, incentivize, and retain more health care workers and physicians will add more than 1,000 health professionals into the health system over the next few years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with this commitment and action from our side of the House comes the dedicated dollars to ensure it's successful. A total of nearly \$100 million in government-wide investment in 2023-24 distributed amongst the ministries of Health, Advanced Education, and Immigration and Career Training will continue advancing innovative solutions that expand and strengthen the health workforce in Saskatchewan communities.

The Ministry of Health's budget of 2023-24 is a record \$6.9 billion, up 6.7 per cent from last year's budget. It includes \$98.8 million for our four-point health human resource action plan. Of that nearly 100 million, 55.5 million has been allocated to support our four-point health human resource action plan.

We heard that it's difficult for new graduating nurses to begin their careers in rural and remote communities when only offered part-time work. Our ministers of Health, working closely with ministry officials, took action and looked at nursing positions across the province. They were able to create 250 full-time positions for offer. As of today, Mr. Speaker, 100 of these positions have been filled, and we know our health care graduates will be excited to relocate to these hard-to-recruit positions knowing they can work full-time.

Improving connections and engagement with Saskatchewan nursing students and recent graduates is also delivering positive results. The SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] has hired 152 nursing graduates from Saskatchewan and from out of province since December 1st, 2022.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition 101 conditional letters of offer have been extended from SHA to nurses who will and currently are graduating this spring from our universities. The SHA has also extended conditional offers to nine Saskatchewan-based RNs [registered nurse] who are currently participating in the bridging education program.

To find immediate support for some of our rural and remote

health care pressures, our government committed 3.1 million for a new registered nurse travel pool program. It has been helpful in mitigating operational shortfalls in some rural communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go on at great length about the health human resource recruitment plan and all the successes, but I do want to take this opportunity to just state categorically that I do support the motion made by the member from Lloydminster, and I'd like to at this time adjourn debate on this motion. Thank you.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move to adjourn the House.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — This House now stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:26.]

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