



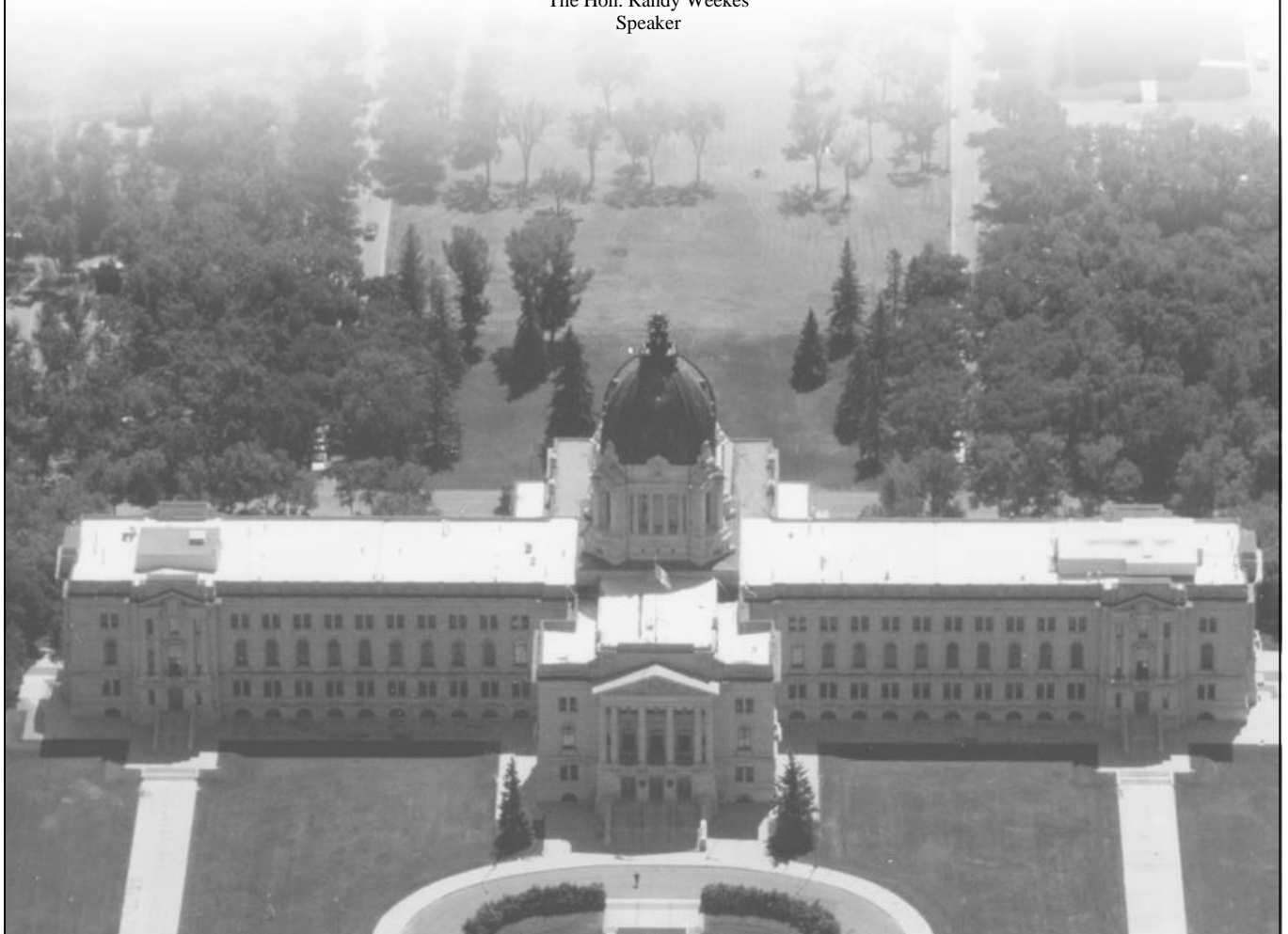
THIRD SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

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

Standings

Government Caucus: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 46; Opposition Caucus: New Democratic Party (NDP) — 14;
Independent: Saskatchewan United Party (Ind.) — 1

Clerks-at-the-Table

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

Sergeant-at-Arms — Lyall Frederiksen

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[The Assembly met at 09:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Lumsden Volunteer Works to Preserve Community History

Mr. B. McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to honour constituent Bill King and his wife Mary Lou who moved to a small farm overlooking Lumsden in the early 1970s. They became active members of the community from day one. Bill became involved in minor hockey as a coach and coordinator of officials, and after the graduation of their three children from Lumsden High, Bill needed more than his horses to occupy his time and energy. So his passion for history, and in particular the history and prehistory of the Lumsden district, led him to the Lumsden Historical Society. This would soon guide him to a leading role in the Lumsden and District Historical Museum.

For the past 30 years, Bill has been a driving force in the expansion and growth of the Lumsden museum. The museum site has now grown to include seven major display buildings and a truly massive collection of local history. Bill has been president of the museum for the past 20 years. Recently Bill was instrumental in organizing the annual construction of a tipi in celebration of National Indigenous Peoples Day on the museum grounds. In recognition of his tireless work, Bill was awarded the Sask Volunteer Medal earlier this year.

So the next time you are racing past Lumsden on No. 11 Highway, consider taking a step back into our past and stop by the Lumsden museum site and say hello to Bill, a perfect, wonderful example of Saskatchewan volunteerism. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Tribute to Jim Sinclair, Advocate for Indigenous Rights

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — miigwech, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize an amazing trailblazer for Indigenous rights, the late Jim Sinclair.

Jim Sinclair was known for his humility, courage, dignity, passion, and commitment to Saskatchewan and Canada's Indigenous people. Mr. Sinclair championed the rights of Indigenous peoples and left his mark on the international stage that will be felt for generations to come.

Mr. Sinclair spoke from the heart and drew strength and inspiration from his own personal condition and common experience. He is remembered for his belief in grassroots ideology and that people and their communities must speak and act on their own behalf and in their own best interests.

In 1981 he launched the first-ever lawsuit against a sitting prime

minister to ensure the Métis had a seat at the First Ministers' conference on Aboriginal constitutional affairs. During the constitutional talks that led to the Meech Lake Accord, Jim took a strong stance against premiers Grant Devine and BC's [British Columbia] Bill Vander Zalm for what he saw was an infringement on Métis rights.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing the late Jim Sinclair for the important contributions he made to our province and our country. miigwech.

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

Construction to Begin on Regina General Hospital Parkade

Mr. Grewal: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about the much-needed parking being added to our capital city's main hospital.

On Monday I had the privilege of joining our Premier and several of my colleagues at the official groundbreaking for the new Regina General Hospital parkade. There have been calls for additional parking at the hospital since the 1990s. This new parkade will help address this need while providing safer and more accessible parking for not only staff but also for patients and visitors of the hospital.

It will be located on the northwest corner of the hospital property which was part of the existing visitor parking lot. A private Regina-based company, Link Developments Ltd., have been selected to build the project. They have recently completed many projects, including the University of Saskatchewan's stadium parkade in Saskatoon. They are responsible for designing, constructing, financing, maintaining, and operating the new parkade under a design-build-partial lease agreement.

The design includes a parking facility with a total of 1,005 stalls, consisting of 873 stalls in the parkade and an additional 132 being located on the surface. This will increase hospital parking by 686 parking spaces. Construction on the parkade is expected to be completed by late 2024. I believe this is a great example of how our government is addressing the needs of our residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Regina Volunteer Serves Sports Community

Mr. Clarke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to recognize Barry Clarke. I would like to congratulate Barry on completing his two-year term as the Chair on the Saskatchewan Roughrider board of directors in June of 2023, and his additional seven years serving on the board.

The Saskatchewan Roughriders have had a special place in Barry's heart for decades. He started attending games with his father, Doug Clarke, back in 1965 and has been an avid fan ever since. For the last 35 years, Barry has dedicated much of his volunteer time to the organization, beginning in 1993 when he chaired his first Plaza of Honour dinner. He went on to chair various Grey Cup festivities in Regina, including co-chairing the

entire festival in 2022 alongside Craig Reynolds.

Barry was also a University of Regina Cougars hockey player from 1976 to 1980 and since then has volunteered countless hours with the Cougar alumni association. In 2015 he was awarded the Dr. Robert and Norma Ferguson Award at the Alumni Crowning Achievement Awards dinner, which is presented annually to the graduate who demonstrates outstanding volunteerism, leadership, and service to the U of R [University of Regina], and the U of R Alumni Association.

I ask all members of this Legislative Assembly to acknowledge and congratulate Barry Clarke, my dad, for his contributions to this province. Thank you.

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

Canadian Centre for Rural and Agricultural Health Supports Saskatchewan Communities

Mr. Friesen: — It's another great day in Riversdale, Mr. Speaker. Recently I brought greetings at the University of Saskatchewan, on behalf of the government, to the Canadian Centre for Rural and Agricultural Health. What a pleasure it was speaking to several of these doctors in advance of the funding announcement, as well as during and after the tour. Mr. Speaker, my mother had dementia, and learning what this organization does in our rural communities is amazing.

Our government supports two of the centre's valuable programs through the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture. The rural dementia action research, or RaDAR, is a unique project partnership with the Ministry of Health that serves rural seniors. It conducts research and hosts a specialist memory clinic for people with complex dementia. RaDAR has also set up satellite clinics in rural communities in our province for dementia support.

The Ministry of Agriculture partners with the centre's Agricultural Health and Safety Network which is also supported by SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and nearly 200 individual RMs [rural municipality] that are members of the network. This network conducts a significant amount of rural outreach and engagement with farmers, agricultural workers, and children in rural areas.

Our government values partnerships with organizations like the Centre for Rural and Agricultural Health to know that all of our communities have the support they need to thrive. I ask all members to join me and thank them for the great work they do. Thank you.

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

Unity Author Shares Story of Survival in Bestselling Memoir

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Helen Martin, a resident of Unity for over 50 years, has recently written a book titled *Don't Ever Call Me Mother: Homeless in My Own Home*.

Helen was reluctant to write at first as she insisted she was not a writer, Mr. Speaker. Helen wrote this book to explain her story of her traumatic childhood to her only child and daughter, Michelle. Helen's book chronicles her childhood, in particular the years of abuse and neglect she suffered at the hands of her stepmother. Helen, who has a diploma in psychiatric nursing, hopes that her story might help other professionals in the mental health field who work with survivors every day.

Mr. Speaker, Helen is grateful for the support she's received during her writing journey, including her husband of 56 years, Wayne, and their daughter, Michelle. Helen's triumphant story has landed her on the FriesenPress Bookstore bestseller list during the first week of June, Mr. Speaker. Since that time, Helen's book has also been chosen as a staff pick at FriesenPress and will be a feature title in their online bookstore in the staff picks selection.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this Assembly join me in congratulating Helen Martin on her bestselling book, and I also want to thank Helen for being so courageous and sharing her story in hopes that it will help others that are struggling or have struggled with abuse and neglect. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Arm River.

Opposition Members' Statements on Carbon Tax

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's that time of day again, time to correct the record, Mr. Speaker. This week the member for Saskatoon Fairview stated that not one person in the NDP [New Democratic Party] caucus supports the federal carbon tax. Not so, Mr. Speaker.

In their own words. The member for Nutana said the need for a carbon tax is, and I quote, "not up for debate." That same member also said, "We know it's time for ambitious climate action using all the tools at our disposal, such as placing a price on carbon." If that wasn't enough, Mr. Speaker, that same member further stated, "We don't think of that [meaning the carbon tax] as a tax. This is a price on pollution and a necessary one."

But, Mr. Speaker, that member's not alone in her thinking. The member for Regina Walsh Acres similarly let his views be known by stating, "My take on the carbon tax? I'm in favour."

So to the member for Saskatoon Fairview who claims her party's position on the carbon tax is clear, Mr. Speaker, I would agree. It is clear that the NDP support the carbon tax, a tax that is driving up the cost of food and gas, driving up inflation. Mr. Speaker, if the opposition leader truly cared about the cost of living in Saskatchewan, she would get her caucus in order, stand up to Jagmeet Singh, and denounce the carbon tax.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Access to Child Care Spaces

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, this tired and out-of-touch government has clearly, clearly lost sight of the things that matter to Saskatchewan people. Let's look at the record when it comes

to child care. Today we're joined by advocates for better child care in our province, seated in your gallery, something that is so important to our economy and so important to families who are struggling with the cost of living.

Megan Schmidt runs the First Years Learning Center here in Regina, and she's concerned that this government has only created a handful of the spaces and has allowed long wait-lists to grow. When will we see real action from this government to create the spaces in this province that families need so desperately today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, most certainly the expansion of our child care spaces in communities across the province is a priority for this government. As we have said many times, we have multiple points of disagreement with the federal government, Mr. Speaker. Joining in funding child care spaces — both the capital costs of those child care spaces as well as the operational costs that parents feel, families feel — is not a point of contention that we have with the federal government.

I believe we were the third province, the third province to sign the national agreement in expanding our child care spaces here in the province, Mr. Speaker.

We have a goal to expand those child care spaces to 28,000, Mr. Speaker, and we're working hard to achieve that. This past year, a little over 200 ECE [early childhood education] spaces were formed. The fact of the matter is this, Mr. Speaker: since 2007 the record of this government is an increase in child care spaces each and every year. We've allocated funding for over 10,500 new centre-based child care spaces. That represents a 114 per cent increase since 2007, Mr. Speaker.

But yes, there's more work to do in training early child care workers, Mr. Speaker. There's more work to do in funding the capital costs alongside the schools that we build, Mr. Speaker. And this is a government that is committed to doing just that.

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

[09:15]

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, goals are one thing, but performance is clearly another. At Megan's child care centre, they have spaces for 90 children but their wait-list is 1,900. Mr. Speaker, this isn't surprising, given that a report released earlier this week shows that only 37 per cent of the 600 spaces this government has committed to, have actually been created. Thirty-seven per cent, Mr. Speaker, is a failing grade, and for families without access to child care this is a real emergency.

So when will we see this Premier treat the child care emergency with the same urgency he's treating the notwithstanding clause?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, we understand there needs to be an expansion of spaces here in the province, not just in Regina but in communities across the province. And I talk to individuals that are facing, I would say, equally challenging times in finding

a child care placement for their child, Mr. Speaker.

That's why, as I said, this is a point of agreement that we have with the federal government. That's why we were the third province to sign that agreement with the federal government, Mr. Speaker. That's why we have expanded the child care training spaces that we have in the province and that's also why we have put in place wage enhancements for those that are looking to get into this as a career, Mr. Speaker.

So there has been an increase in child care spaces up to and including this past year — 114 per cent increase in those spaces, Mr. Speaker. But in growing and thriving communities across the province, we most certainly understand that there is more work to do in this space. And as I said in my previous answer, this is a government that most certainly is committed to doing just that.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I'll agree with the Premier on this. This crisis does exist in communities large and small across the province. Also joining our calls today, Mr. Speaker, for action on this front is Antonietta Harris. She couldn't be here today because she has her hands full running her own child care centre here in the city.

But Antonietta wants to be part of the \$10-a-day child care system. But a letter that she received recently, after she applied, says, and I quote:

Unfortunately we continue to experience a staffing shortage and are unable to assign your application to an early learning child care consultant. I understand this has created a delay in your plans to become a registered home, and I apologize.

Mr. Speaker, this government should be working night and day to ensure that families have access to \$10-a-day child care. The question: when will we see urgent action from that government on that front?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, as I said, we were the third province in the nation to sign the child care agreement with the federal government. As I said, we have also looked at where we can put in place wage enhancements, how we can increase the training seats that we have here in the province, Mr. Speaker.

But with respect to the federal agreement, there's also a number of parameters around that, that we worked with the federal government on how can we can expand into, for example, child care offerings that are offered in people's homes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, continuing to work with the federal government to open up the parameters of the program that we have, so that we can ensure that we are not only placing the wage enhancements in areas where they are most effective, but ensuring that we are increasing the training opportunities that we have for people in communities across the province, Mr. Speaker, ultimately, ultimately with the result of allowing us to enhance the number of child care spaces that we have in communities right across Saskatchewan.

Ultimately that's the goal in growing and vibrant communities across Saskatchewan. That's work that this government has been working on since we had the honour of forming government in 2007, with a 114 per cent increase in our child care spaces in this province, Mr. Speaker. But we understand in those growing and vibrant communities there is more work to do. And this is a government that I would say, and each of these members sitting on the government side are committed to doing that work.

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

Ms. Conway: — Just for the folks tuning in at home, Mr. Speaker, the validators, the child care providers in the gallery are literally shaking their heads in disbelief at that Premier's answers.

Mr. Speaker, child care providers like Megan know this government isn't doing enough to create spaces. She told the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] and I quote, "While the price goes down for those currently in child care, it does not make it more accessible for other families because there are still no spaces."

Families without a registered spot see zero dollars in savings when their budgets are already stretched like never before. Access to a wait-list is not access to child care, Mr. Speaker. What's the plan to create the spaces this government promised when they announced the deal last year?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the Premier indicated in his answers, our government was the third province to reduce fees to \$10 a day. Mr. Speaker, we understand that child care, access to child care, is important for families across our province, whether they live here in Regina or whether they live in communities all over the province.

Mr. Speaker, in the last couple of years, we've allocated funding for an additional 5,700 spaces. And just last month, Mr. Speaker — I have the list here with me — just last month, we allocated nearly 2,500 new spaces of child care around the province, including 451 here in Regina; 328 in Saskatoon; and 148 in Moose Jaw.

Mr. Speaker, we know there's more work to do. We understand that. We're committed to doing that work. We do that each and every single day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Conway: — More work to do — the understatement of the century, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about other communities. We have the director for Rocanville daycare with us today, and we have again Nichole Kessel, director of Wiggles and Giggles and Chair of the Sask directors association. She is becoming something of a familiar face in this legislature.

She first came here begging for action from this government on the child care crisis last March. The then minister of Education assured her changes were coming. No action. She came back in

May, Mr. Speaker. Again she was promised action and it never materialized. Back in May she's quoted as saying, "If something is not done, we will probably crumble."

She's here today, and things are definitely crumbling, Mr. Speaker. She had to shut down her centre this week for lack of staffing, leave parents floundering. She is exhausted, demoralized, but she is committed to the children and parents of her community in Whitewood and early childhood education across this province.

When will we see the same urgency from this government to address this staffing crisis in child care, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I welcome guests from all across the province that have joined us today. It's great to have them here, as it is great to have guests every single day here, Mr. Speaker, in this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to certified ECEs [early childhood educator] in this province, since last year there's been 200 more positions added. But, Mr. Speaker, you know, when we talk about recruiting more people to the sector, which we know is important. It's being identified . . . as the opposition. I know MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] hear about it in communities all across the province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have over 1,100 tuition-free seats available for people who are interested in joining the ECE sector. Mr. Speaker, we've made a number of wage enhancements, both last year and just last month, again to incentivize and encourage people to join the ECE sector so that we can make sure that more child care spaces can be added.

Mr. Speaker, you know, in my previous answer I referenced new child care spaces being allocated. We've got a number of other communities; I'd love to get to them in the next answer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Conway: — Words, words, words. Is it working, Mr. Speaker? Is it working? This government is failing to create the spots that they promised. They're failing to train enough early childhood educators. Don't take it from me. Don't take it from me. Again, Megan said:

In order to have more spaces, we need more early childhood educators in the field. And those early childhood educators need to be qualified and they need to have gone through their classes and they need to want to be here. And while some of them want to be here right now, they can't be because they can't work for just above minimum wage.

Wages, staffing, training. We have yet to see a workforce strategy, a wage grid, a plan that this government has now promised for over a year, Mr. Speaker. When will we see urgent action from this government to turn this around?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — You know, Mr. Speaker, I briefly touched on it in my previous answer, but I mean the incentives that have been provided by the Ministry of Education for those seeking to join the ECE sector, Mr. Speaker, they're not insignificant, as that member opposite seems to indicate.

Mr. Speaker, wage enhancements up to \$5 an hour. Free accelerated remote ECE training and professional development. Mr. Speaker, I would point out again there's 1,100 tuition-free spots for those looking to join the ECE sector. That is not insignificant. Tuition free for people to join the ECE sector, Mr. Speaker.

As I indicated in a previous answer, Mr. Speaker, we've allocated 2,500 new spots around the province in communities like Assiniboia, Bengough, Carrot River, Cudworth, Meota, Melfort, Wilkie, Regina Beach, Mr. Speaker.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we know there's more work to do: that's recruiting more people to the sector; that's allocating new spots. We're doing that work every day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Conway: — Mr. Speaker, it's clear that this Premier and that out-of-touch Education minister and this tired government don't think that child care is important. You can tell through their actions what they truly care about. In the last year since the child care agreement was signed, again 37 per cent of spots have been filled. One wait-list, 1,900 parents, Mr. Speaker. No meaningful action as those wait-lists only grow.

But 18 letters and a by-election are all that is required to spring this Premier into action to recall the legislature, ram through a bill, invoke the notwithstanding clause, violate children's rights, Mr. Speaker. When will we see this government act on the things that matter to Saskatchewan people, to Saskatchewan parents, and deliver on the spaces they've failed to create?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, we know that access to child care is important for families all across the province, whether it's in Regina or whether it's in communities all around the province.

But, Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite wants to talk about action, I'd love to outline some of the actions that we've taken in this sector. Mr. Speaker, as I've said, as I've indicated previously, we were the third province to get to \$10-a-day child care, Mr. Speaker, in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we've got free training and education to increase the number of ECEs. We've got wage enhancement for ECEs. We have a wide variety of grants available to child care operators, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue working with the federal government. The Premier indicated in one of his answers that we would like more flexibility in that agreement, Mr. Speaker, so that we can best allocate that funding to the unique child care sector that we have in this province. We're going to continue

advocating with the federal government for that flexibility, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Antonietta is a constituent of mine. She runs a daycare. It's her business and she wants to be part of that \$10-a-day child care. But the Sask Party bureaucracy over there has no timeline for when she can get approved. She reached out to my office in May. That's six months ago, Mr. Speaker, and this minister, he can't give her a timeline. Entrepreneurs need timelines to grow their businesses, to survive. It is sheer incompetence.

Antonietta says, I need a timeline so I can plan my business. The government is not fulfilling the needs of daycares or parents. Parents are being affected the most, as there are long wait-lists and a limited amount of care available. I know of one parent who has been waiting for five years for a child care spot. Mr. Speaker, what does the minister have to say about that?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — Mr. Speaker, I've outlined in my previous answers the actions that we've taken, the hard actions that we've taken to encourage the sector. Mr. Speaker, within the Ministry of Education, we aim to communicate with the child care sector and allocate spaces and make sure that they have access to grants.

Mr. Speaker, again, you know, if the member wants to reach out to my office and bring forward this case, we'd be happy to take another look, Mr. Speaker. Again as I've said, we just allocated almost 2,500 new spaces in communities all over the province, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

[09:30]

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

Closure of Regina Lutheran Home

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, this tired and out-of-touch government is failing some of the youngest people in Saskatchewan but also failing some of the oldest.

Today we're joined in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, by Val Schalme. Her father lives at the Lutheran care home here in Regina. She's been speaking out about this government's decision to close her father's home. Instead of working to ensure the Lutheran care home stays open, this government is shutting it down.

Will the Minister for Seniors meet with Val and all those here today to find a plan to keep Lutheran care home open?

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

Hon. Mr. T. McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'll begin by saying certainly welcome to Val, and I would be pleased to meet with her after question period today.

I would also like to correct the record, Mr. Speaker. It was not the government's decision to close this. This was a business decision made by Eden Care Communities and it was done unfortunately without the involvement of SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] or the ministry.

We do value the long-term care services that Eden Care Communities provided as a third-party partner, and I would like to thank them for their dedicated service to support Regina residents for nearly 60 years.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that this transition may be difficult for some residents who wish to remain in Regina Lutheran Home, and our government takes resident care very seriously. It is our expectation that the SHA and management of Regina Lutheran Home will work closely with the residents and their families to find alternative placement in other long-term care facilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, this minister needs to get his facts straight. The facts are that Eden Care could no longer provide hundreds of thousands of dollars in charity to this government so that they could provide care for their residents. Those are the facts. The failures lie at the feet of this tired and out-of-touch government.

Mr. Speaker, Val isn't the only one here today. Lorraine Simpson is in the gallery. Her 104-year-old father lives in the Regina Lutheran Home. She doesn't want to see his life uprooted and disrupted. The government should be working on a plan to keep those seniors in their homes with the same urgency that they're using to push ahead with the notwithstanding clause.

When will we see the urgent action that these families need to keep their loved ones in their home?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Seniors.

Hon. Mr. T. McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, our government takes resident care very seriously, and as I said, Mr. Speaker, for the record this was not a government decision, despite my friend's best efforts to try and convince people otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, our government has announced that we are planning and developing 600 long-term care beds in Regina. That is our plan. We are working on it. They will not be ready tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, however we acknowledge that there is work to do in this space and that is precisely what we are doing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, we're also joined by Shelley Johnson, who has a loved one in the Regina Lutheran care home, and Don Gunderson, whose wife lives there.

Again that minister needs to check his facts because the Lutheran

care home tried to negotiate with this government for six months to stay open, and they got no answer from this government, just like those citizens up there got no answers from this government when they contacted them. It wasn't until this government snapped its fingers and announced that this home would be closing.

How is that fair to these seniors who built this province? Why didn't this tired and out-of-touch government even try to find a deal to keep the Lutheran care home open?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Seniors.

Hon. Mr. T. McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would also like to welcome Shelley and Don. And if they would like to meet with me after question period, I'd be happy to do so.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that SHA did carefully examine this property and it was deemed that the property is near the end of its lifespan and therefore purchasing that property would not be viable for us to continue with. Mr. Speaker, as I've said, this was a business decision made by Eden Care Communities. And SHA and the Ministry of Health are doing what we can to ensure a smooth transition to find alternative placement for these residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Burki: — Mr. Speaker, Lutheran care home is in my constituency in Regina Coronation Park and I am proud to be their MLA and their voice in the legislature. These seniors and their families don't want to move from their home. Why won't ministers find the way to keep Lutheran care home open?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Seniors.

Hon. Mr. T. McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said, again, this was a business decision made by Eden Care Communities. We have looked at the facility. It's not a viable option for it to continue under SHA's management, Mr. Speaker. However it is a priority to find a placement for the Regina residents in that facility who prefer placement in Regina, and we are working to do so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Burki: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, these seniors, they built this province and deserve a life of respect and dignity. At such old age, moving can be a very serious challenge for them. Government should be stepping up to keep this care home open and keep the seniors in their home.

When will the government listen to the families, listen to the residents, to keep this care home open for the constituents?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, these are interesting questions, given just a couple of years ago, we saw members on that side

standing in their place calling for all of the affiliate long-term care homes in this province to actually be closed and brought in under the public management. Mr. Speaker, I find these questions very interesting.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to a decision that has been made by one of these affiliates, the minister has committed to meeting with the folks that have joined us here today, like our ministers do when people join us in the gallery, here today to discuss a decision that has been made by one of these affiliates to transition the service that they are providing in their facility, Mr. Speaker.

I would remind members of this House, members of this community, and this province, that the largest long-term care investment in the history of the province — 600 long-term care beds — is coming to the community of Regina, Mr. Speaker. So is there a discussion that likely needs to happen with respect to how do we transition these individuals in this facility?

Mr. Speaker, is there an opportunity for discussion on how we ultimately transition our community members, our family members, from a facility like Lutheran care, that has provided great care as an affiliate in this province, to one of the 600 beds — the significant investment, the largest investment that this government has ever made in the history of the province — in this Queen City, in our capital city of Regina?

And so is that a discussion that should be occurring? Quite likely that is, Mr. Speaker, and that's a discussion that the minister most certainly is interested in having. And not only with those that have joined us here today with family members in Lutheran care home, Mr. Speaker, but having with Lutheran care, as well as the city proper in Regina.

The Speaker: — I very clearly heard the member from Regina Rosemont referring to the Premier's comments, said "don't make things up." It's unparliamentary. I ask the member to stand, withdraw, and apologize.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I would withdraw and apologize.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 137

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cockrill that **Bill No. 137 — *The Education (Parents' Bill of Rights) Amendment Act, 2023/Loi modificative de 2023 sur l'éducation (Déclaration des droits des parents)*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be picking up where I left off last night at 11 p.m. on this Bill No. 137, *The Education (Parents' Bill of Rights) Amendment Act*. There are a

couple of additional letters that I will be reading into the record. I just want to thank all those who submitted letters to the official opposition.

As folks know, the way that the Sask Party government is going about this legislation is completely unprecedented in this province. A few days ago we had, you know, the opportunity to debate a motion that would turn the procedural rules of this House on their head so that they could ram through this bill without the usual accountability, transparency, opportunity for consultation, for input from the public. Changed the meeting times of this House for between 9 a.m. and 11 p.m. No breaks — no breaks to use the washroom, no breaks to have a meal, no breaks to take a phone call, no breaks to check in with a constituent or a stakeholder, no breaks to hold a meeting to look at this brand new piece of legislation with experts, with rights holders.

So one of the things that we did in the official opposition is we made a call-out. We asked people to send in their feedback. And we will be doing our best to scrutinize this bill as very best we can in the four days that the Sask Party government has deemed necessary, has allowed us, Mr. Speaker, to have a look at this legislation that the Children's Advocate, may I remind you, says is likely inconsistent with federal law, the Charter, with provincial law, the Sask human rights code. A human rights code that the current Minister for Advanced Education saw fit to amend several years ago when he brought gender identity as a prohibited ground of discrimination. To him I say kudos for that. But what on earth is compelling that same minister to now stand in his place and vote for a bill that contains a clause that will override that portion of the Sask human rights code that he saw fit to amend just a few years ago? Mr. Speaker, it defies reason. It defies common sense. It defies common decency, Mr. Speaker.

I have a letter here from Mark Weippert. And I'm sorry if I'm not pronouncing that correctly. He is a constituent of mine. His pronouns are he/him.

I'm writing today to make a request to stop the current provincial government's actions in relation to the current consideration to use the notwithstanding clause regarding child pronoun use in schools in Saskatchewan. I'm writing as a constituent in Regina Elphinstone-Centre as I currently reside in Washington Park in Regina, Saskatchewan.

I'm very opposed to the idea of taking away the freedoms of children enshrined in our Canadian Bill of Rights and our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

And he goes on to quote articles of non-discrimination:

The principle states that no child should be treated unfairly on any basis. Children should not be discriminated against based on their race, religion, or abilities, what they think or say, the type of family they come from, where they live, what language they speak, what their parents do, what gender they identify with, what culture their culture is, whether they have a disability, or whether they are rich or poor.

He quotes from article 3: "the best interests of the child," which I had an opportunity to speak about. It's one of the foundational

legal principles, all-precedent-setting law in this country, has identified the best interests of the child as what should be the guiding principle in all policies, regulations, and laws that are enacted that affect children. That should be the guiding principle.

[09:45]

And yet we hear from this Children's Advocate report that not only did they not consult with any expert in this field, not only did they not consider children, the rights holders that are affected by this bill, not only did they not do a children's rights impact assessment which they are compelled to do as a signatory to the United Nations rights of the child convention, Mr. Speaker . . . When the Children's Advocate, in absence of that assessment, in absence of any care to the best interests of the child, went back and looked over this policy and went through it article by article, in the portion of her children's rights assessment where she looked at the positive and negative impacts when it came to assessing the best interests of the child and how that was addressed by this policy, she had nothing positive to say about this policy. She could not point to a single positive factor when it came to the best interests of the child in her analysis of this government's new pronoun policy, Mr. Speaker. I'll go back to the letter.

He quotes that article, "best interests of the child":

The principle places the best interests of children as the primary concern in making decisions that may affect them. All adults, including those who are involved in making decisions related to budgets, policy, and the law should do what is best for children. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children.

A study [and he provides a link to the study, an academic article on jahonline.org] has shown that:

Feelings of gender dysphoria associated with the incongruence between one's physical traits and gender identity are also associated with mental health challenges for transgender and nonbinary youth. As such, both the treatment of gender dysphoria and the reduction of minority stress offer pathways towards reducing disparities in depression and suicidality found among transgender and nonbinary youth.

While a Charter right is not absolute, I vehemently disagree with the idea that child gender expression is in any way related to a Charter right restriction like child pornography, and I don't agree it should be restricted in cases like this. As the protection of children should be one of the primary focuses of any governing body . . .

And again, Mark is on firm footing here. Every court of the land would agree with him. This thought is supported by the UN [United Nations] Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Charter, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*, Mr. Speaker.

Whether they are a federal, provincial, or municipal governing body, I specifically request that this current government stop its current actions to take away a child's self-determination and ability to identify as they choose. For clarity, I specifically am opposing the idea that parents have

complete control over how a child presents themselves until that person is an adult.

On a more fiscally related note, I also ask that this current government does not use funds that should be used to provide service to its constituents to fight the legal challenges that are being brought by other parties in response to this decision and proposed legislation.

I've included Mr. Moe on this email as he is the current leader of our governing provincial party.

Mark has not gotten a reply from the Premier or anyone from the Sask Party government since sending this letter, Mr. Speaker, and his letter was sent on September 14th.

It begs the question, Mr. Speaker, you know, as part of the legal action that we've spoken about here today, the one that resulted in Justice Megaw saying, okay, we're going to look at this in more detail. We're going to look at the substantive bill and see if it unjustifiably violates Charter rights in a few months here, but in the meantime let's press pause because someone could get hurt.

The evidentiary record there was that this government got 15 letters, 7 of which identified as parents in support of their policy. But they haven't yet provided any evidence of how many letters they've gotten from the good folks of Saskatchewan speaking out against this policy, urging this Sask Party government to pause, to walk back from the heavy-handed and undemocratic tactics they are using to push forward this policy.

And I'm not just speaking about the decision to make a mockery of this process here in the Legislative Assembly, to circumvent the rules, to change them for the first time in ways that we've never seen before. I'm talking about the pre-emptive decision to invoke the notwithstanding clause. How many letters have they gotten about that, Mr. Speaker? How many letters have they gotten about that?

This is a letter from Blair Roberts, who is also one of the directors of the John Howard Society of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. This is a letter that Blair Roberts wrote to his MLA, the member for Regina Pasqua, and he copied the opposition and provided permission for this letter to be read in this House:

To MLA Mr. Muhammad Fiaz [this is a quote]:

My name is Blair Roberts. I live at 1903 York Street in your Regina Pasqua riding with my wife, Melissa Roberts. We've been married for 19 years and have three incredible children 17, 15, and 7. They all attend different schools at the moment with our youngest still at Connaught and our oldest two attending Balfour and Sheldon-Williams, respectively. We've lived here for 18 years.

Our three children are also unique and brilliant in their own ways. Our oldest is graduating this year. They are so courageous and talented. Our middle child is also in high school. Their brilliance and maturity inspires me every day. Our youngest one is navigating elementary school, growing up too fast, and always bringing joyful energy. Being a dad is such an amazing responsibility and gift.

Your Sask Party profile mentioned that you and your wife have three young boys.

And again, this is a letter to the member of Regina Pasqua, a letter to the member of Regina Pasqua. And I don't believe that this constituent of his has yet gotten a response to this letter to the member for Regina Pasqua.

I'm writing to respectfully request that you stand with our family and advocate with your Sask Party colleagues to reverse course on planned changes to school policy requiring teachers to disclose name and pronoun changes to parents when youth are under 16. We hope that you will represent our family, as your constituents, and do the right thing if the notwithstanding clause is brought forward, and vote against its use.

And again, this is a letter to the member from Regina Pasqua. This is one of his constituents. And this constituent has yet to get a response from the member for Regina Pasqua.

Our 15-year-old child is trans nonbinary. Even with our acceptance at home, when they first came out, it was still hard for them to tell us a year later when they decided to change their name. It was important for them to be sure about it before telling family and friends. They asked their teacher and close friends to use their new name at school for nearly a month before they felt comfortable letting us in on this significant life change.

My wife and I found out at their grade 8 graduation when we saw their new name under their picture on the projector screen and was called out when they received their diploma. As you can imagine, it was surprising to us. I'll even admit to feeling a small sadness, wishing they had felt more comfortable to tell us sooner.

Even as someone who strongly opposes these new policies, I understand a parent's desire to know what's going on in their child's life. I wish I could have talked with them through that first month of finding their footing with a new name. That, my desire to know more about my kid's life, does not and should not overrule their need for safety and to come out on their own terms. The Sask Party should not take the choice out of the hands of trans youth to tell their parents when they are ready.

Our child's teacher honoured their wish to not inform us sooner, and I'm so grateful they showed that kindness and respect to my child. This isn't about teachers keeping secrets from parents. This is about young people needing to be safe. As a parent, if my child is with a safe adult in the classroom who has their back, the only appropriate response is gratitude for the countless hours and energy invested in teaching, supporting, and protecting my child.

And I just wish the member for Regina Pasqua would listen. I wish he would listen because this is his constituent. This was a letter addressed to him, copied to me. This was a letter to him, and he has yet to receive a response to his letter.

It doesn't mean that teachers are always safe. One needs not look further than Legacy Christian school where decades of

abuse took place. If the Sask Party really wants to protect kids, they should be strengthening our child protection policies and procedures, not inventing problems that don't exist.

I have plenty of opportunities to be involved with my children's education if I have concerns about what they are engaging in school. I can volunteer. I can attend parent/teacher interviews and build relationships with their teachers. I can support local sports teams and extracurricular activities. I can help my kids with their homework and talk about what they're learning in their classes. I can meet with the principal when there are concerns. I can even pull them out of certain topics if I really feel strongly enough about what is being taught.

"Parental rights" are already built into the education system. Taking rights away from trans youth in this way does not give their parents more rights, only more control and power over kids who are already living in fear and vulnerable.

And I just wish the member for Regina Pasqua would listen to this letter instead of chatting with his colleagues because this is his constituent. It's a letter written to him, and this person has yet to receive a response.

Taking rights away from trans youth in this way does not give their parents more rights, only more control and power over kids who are already living in fear and vulnerable. The only thing this policy will accomplish is the erosion of trust between trans youth and their educators, while creating deeper rifts in families. Do you really want to be responsible for ensuring 2SLGBTQ+ youth in our school system go to school more alone, more afraid with these new policies? Asking Saskatchewan teachers to loop in parents they may know to be potentially unsafe shifts the responsibility of enforcing this harmful policy from your government to overburdened and under-resourced teachers.

This policy is not leadership. I wanted you to know there are people who live in your riding that are impacted by these changes.

And again, this is a letter to the member from Regina Pasqua. This is his constituent. This is a letter addressed to him, copied to me.

This policy will do more harm to Saskatchewan children and their families than its supporters could possibly understand. There's no justifiable reason the Sask Party should add this barrier to the already difficult and lonely journey that trans youth face as they come out to the world.

It is not an over-exaggeration to state that policies like the one proposed by Premier Moe and former minister of Education Duncan have cost kids their lives. And as Minister Duncan and Premier Moe made abundantly and disappointingly clear, they did little to no research or expert consultation before releasing this policy.

I hope you have the integrity and strength to follow a better path than the one your colleagues are on. We are asking you to represent our family and vote against using the

notwithstanding clause to ignore the recent court ruling. Please consider advocating for your Sask Party colleagues to do the same.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Blair Roberts

I want to thank Blair Roberts for giving us permission to read that very well-written, very thoughtful letter. It leaves in some of the evidence that we presented here before this Legislative Assembly. It also speaks to his personal experience, his reaction as a parent, as someone whose kid did go by a different pronoun. And he found out a month later. And I think it's very courageous of him to talk about how he felt in that moment and to put his personal story out there for the public and hopefully for the Sask Party government to hear and consider as they move forward.

[10:00]

The next letter I have is a constituent of Lumsden-Morse — Terry Toews. It reads as follows:

I am deeply concerned about Premier Scott Moe's threat to use the notwithstanding clause to strip the rights of children and the rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ students in Saskatchewan. The pronoun legislation is a completely unnecessary piece of dog whistle politics, and using the notwithstanding clause to force it through is indefensible.

Every student deserves a safe and inclusive educational environment that respects their rights and dignity. The use of the notwithstanding clause circumvents Charter rights. It is a heavy-handed and deeply concerning precedent, violating the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusivity that every Canadian citizen holds dear.

We must uphold the rights of all individuals, especially the most vulnerable among us. I stand in solidarity with organizations like UR Pride and Saskatchewan's child advocate Lisa Broda, who have both voiced their concerns about the irreparable harm this policy causes.

Please use your influence and position to advocate for a more inclusive and respectful approach to the matter. The rights and well-being of 2SLGBTQIA+ students should be protected and supported. Their voices must be heard in shaping policies that affect them directly.

I urge you to denounce the use of the notwithstanding clause and support policies that promote equality, inclusivity, and respect for all students. The threat to use the notwithstanding clause illustrates the extent to which Premier Moe is willing to go to appeal to the worst instincts of the far right base whose support he fears is slipping. It is cynical and despicable to sacrifice our vulnerable kids to political ambition.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to hearing your response and your commitment to upholding the rights and dignities of all students in Saskatchewan.

And I don't know whether he got a response from the member for Lumsden-Morse but I hope that he did, Mr. Speaker.

Terry asks for a government to act to protect the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusivity. That word, "inclusivity," that's an interesting word because we've heard that in this House recently, Mr. Speaker. We've heard the government talk about how this is an inclusive policy. You know, I just about fell off my chair when I heard that, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to suggest that there's something of a penchant for doublespeak from this government, Mr. Speaker, and that's a pattern of using words and slogans that maybe distort the reality. I'm going to suggest that whenever you hear a word or a slogan from the Sask Party government — growth that works for everyone, the best place in Canada to live with a disability, an inclusive policy — I think our spidey senses should be tingling a bit, Mr. Speaker. We should be preparing to dig a bit deeper.

Sask-first. While our jobs growth is last in the country. Sask-first. While we fall from leading the country in per-student funding to ninth in the country. Sask-first. We have some of the highest rates of food bank use in the country. Growth that works for everyone. And our child poverty rates one in four, well above the national average. The best place in Canada to live with a disability. When we haven't seen an increase to the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program in a decade, in a decade, Mr. Speaker. Folks with a permanent and injuring disability with barriers to employment living in deep poverty, Mr. Speaker.

And it's interesting because we just had another poverty report come out. I think it was yesterday or the day before. This is a national report that measures poverty in Canada and there's a . . . The Citizens for Public Justice poverty trends 2023, October 2023 and right there on page 4 there's a map, a map of Canada. And it contains every province and territory's grade when it comes to four measures: the market-basket measure, the low-income measure, food insecurity, and core housing need. And I'll just explain those really quick.

Canada's official poverty line, which is the market-basket measure, the MBM, considers someone to be living in poverty if they don't have enough income to afford the cost of a "basket of goods and services deemed necessary for an adequate standard of living."

The low-income measure is distinct from that. It looks at the median income for a household of a given size, including singles, and defines poverty as having less than half — less than half — of that median income. Because of this, the low-income measure reflects not only material deprivation but also income inequality.

The other measure I mentioned, core housing need. A household is considered to be in core housing need if: (a) their housing is unacceptable in terms of adequacy — major repairs needed; suitability — insufficient rooms for the size and makeup of the household; or affordability — shelter costs are more than 30 per cent of their before-tax income — before-tax income — and acceptable alternative housing in the community would cost 30 per cent or more of their before-tax income.

There isn't a definition here of food insecurity, but I think we know what that is: not having enough food, Mr. Speaker.

Now, this map comes with the average for Canada which, when it comes to the market-basket measure, is 7.4 per cent of the population. 7.4 are below the official poverty line on that MBM measure. But that number is actually 9.1 in Saskatchewan — 9.1. And I'm scanning the map. I'm scanning the map and I can't find another province or territory that scores as low as Saskatchewan. Manitoba is 8.8 per cent; Alberta is 7.8; BC, 8.8; Ontario, 7.7; Quebec, 5.2; Nova Scotia is 8.6. But Saskatchewan is 9.1 per cent — last in the country. Again . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yeah, for the member from Regina Pasqua.

Low-income measure, Mr. Speaker. 18.4 per cent — we're the average. We're not below or above the average for Canada. Food . . . Oh sorry, I lied. We are way above the national average. I was looking at the wrong thing. The national average . . . I was surprised but I was willing to give them kudos. I misspoke.

The average low-income measure in Canada, 15.5 per cent of the population. In Saskatchewan, 18.4 per cent. And again I'm scanning the map, scanning the map, scanning the map, oh, we're second-last in the country. Manitoba's 18.8 per cent. Everyone else . . . oh, Nunavut, so we're third-last. Everyone else in the country scores higher than Saskatchewan when it comes to the low-income measure, which looks at the median income for a household and defines poverty as having less than half the median income, Mr. Speaker. So this not only reflects real material deprivation, this reflects income inequality. And we know that income inequality is one of the most powerful predictors of struggle in a community. The bigger that gap is before those who have and those who have not, the worse it is for everyone, Mr. Speaker.

Next we have food insecurity: 18.4 per cent of Canadians are food insecure. Wow. One in five Canadians, nearly, Mr. Speaker. I'm scanning the map, scanning the map, scanning the map. Looks like we're . . . There's a few that are better and a few that are worse. We're kind of right there in the middle. But we're certainly above the national average, at 20.3 per cent.

Core housing need, again above the national average. 10.1 per cent of Canadians face core housing need and in Saskatchewan that number is 10.3 per cent. So again, growth that works for everyone. Sask-first, best place in Canada to live with a disability. The Sask Party government's new, inclusive education policy. Doublespeak, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, our child poverty rates are even worse. The last time we had a poverty report card, in 2021, we were well above the national average. As I said, the national average is about one in five. Here in Saskatchewan it's one in four. Twenty-six per cent of children are in poverty and for lone-parent families that rate is 47.6 per cent. Despite the fact that this Sask Party government has made promises to eliminate child poverty, things are only getting worse. In 2019 there were 73,520 children living in poverty. Six years before that, there were less — 71,700.

And it's not just the fact that children are living in poverty. What makes Saskatchewan so unique is the depth of poverty, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan has a significant depth of poverty problem, with families falling well below the poverty line. In many examples, families that met the criteria were at least 13 to \$16,000 below the poverty line. And we know, Mr. Speaker, that

of those numbers, they are vastly, disproportionately represented by visible minorities, by lone-parent families, and of course by Indigenous folks, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to read a letter from Rev. Sarah Giles into the record. She's a constituent of Saltcoats-Melville. Pronouns are she/her:

I feel as a mother of school-age children and as a religious leader that I have an obligation to use my voice to try to help youth grow into adults. My belief that God is the original they/them supports my belief that everyone is created by God and is known by God before they are ever born.

[10:15]

This is certainly not Christian behaviour [Mr. Speaker]. It's time that the people of Saskatchewan stand up for what is right. The foundation of a strong education is exposure to diverse thinking. As our communities across Saskatchewan continue to grow and diversify, it is imperative that our school policies and curriculum remain adaptable and malleable. Unfortunately it seems that your recently announced policy regarding the mandatory inclusion of parents in the pronouns and preferred name of students has missed the mark.

I agree with and appreciate that families are vital in supporting, educating, and caring for their children, and I sincerely value the role of public schools in serving as a safe haven for all children regardless of their family background. I also understand the role of the public schools to protect children when parents and families may pose a substantial threat to a child's safety. Ultimately a school's duties are both to educate and protect our community's youth.

This policy both in word and in practice is not only dangerous but it is also actively harmful for all students, especially those who are transgender, nonbinary, and thus negates your own pledge to provide safe and inclusive spaces.

While the discussion of gender identity itself is not inherently problematic or dangerous in a family setting, the fact remains that youth who identify as members of the LGBTQ2S+ communities to include youth who are transgender and nonbinary are more likely to experience abuse at home, more likely to experience homelessness as a result of needing to leave their home due to either abuse or being kicked out by parents, and more likely to experience self-harming behaviour sometimes leading to attempting and completing suicide.

Additionally, youth who found their schools to be supportive environments reported lower rates of attempted suicide than those who reported hostile environments at their schools.

This is from the Trevor Project national survey on LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning] youth mental health 2020, which we've heard referenced before in this House, notably in the extremely powerful letter of Dr. Gwen Grinyer.

As an ordained church minister and mother of three who attend public school and whose church membership includes many who identify as members of the LGBTQS+ community, I can assure you that open discussion and acceptance of pronouns doesn't lead people to change their gender or sexuality. Pronouns merely reflect one's identity. The logic that asking students for their pronouns will necessarily cause "gender confusion" is both flawed and problematic.

Everyone has a gender identity and not recognizing or verbalizing this doesn't make it disappear, even students who are firmly aware of their cisgender identity of pronouns and pronoun preferences. For a child to state pronouns that are not in line with those their parent indicated on their initial school registration form only allows feelings of safety, security, and representation for the student.

In no way do pronouns impact the child's ability to learn or the teacher's ability to disseminate information.

Pronouns being a big topic of debate within schools can make trans and nonbinary students feel unsafe or unwelcome within their schools because their identity is being called into question. An environment that questions the importance and validity of pronouns can make the act of sharing one's pronouns of their own volition an act of bravery and potentially fear. Knowing someone's pronouns and purposefully using other pronouns is a blatant act of discrimination and should be treated as such.

It cannot be stressed enough that pronouns affect everyone, not just trans, nonbinary, and LGBTQ+ people. Everybody deserves to have their pronouns respected. For example, should you, Hon. Cockrill, be repeatedly referred to by either she or they pronouns, it seems safe to assume you would consider that disrespectful, even potential harassment. Again all pronouns are valid and should be respected.

While telling a parent or family of a child's request for pronoun recognition doesn't necessarily jeopardize that youth's safety, it also isn't automatically the school's role to inform parents. Schools need to understand the potential risks students may face at home. Respect all students' identities and create inclusive, supportive communities that centre the needs of students most at risk of harm.

I strongly urge you to dispose of this policy, most pressingly the guidance prohibiting the use of pronouns and names, and the requirement to inform parents of a youth's stated gender identity.

I'm going to move on to another letter, another constituent of mine. This is a letter from Kathleen McGourty, pronouns she/her.

I'm writing to express my deep concern and disappointment regarding the recent use of the notwithstanding clause by the Saskatchewan Party government and Premier Moe. As a teacher and a concerned citizen, I believe it is essential to voice my opposition to these actions, which are putting the rights and well-being of trans children at risk while also placing teachers in an incredibly difficult position.

I'm just going to pause for a second, Mr. Speaker, and return to some of the topics that I touched on last night, mainly the fact that we're now into a territory where teachers, psychologists, counsellors, speech language pathologists, social workers in the school system, who have a whole set of professional ethics, a whole set of guiding ethics and professional standards, are now being asked by their employer to violate the rights of children, to take actions that might cause harm, to do things that in other contexts — well in potentially this context — constitute harassment or pitting teachers and other school staff against their own professional duties and ethics.

And again that is because this government has put zero thought into how this is going to play out on the ground. Couldn't agree more with the letter I previously read. I think it was Terry's letter where she said this is nothing but dog whistle politics. This is nothing but partisan politics.

And I return to the points made by Professor Robert Leckey, a legal expert in the field of the notwithstanding clause, family law, and constitutional law who urges people when assessing their government's decision to invoke the notwithstanding clause to apply a certain rubric of analysis on that decision — one of them being, why did they do it? When did they do it? How extreme is it?

And again I will say that the answer to every single one of those questions that Dr. Robert Leckey urges us to ask when our government invokes the notwithstanding clause, every single one of those questions results in a damning answer for the Sask Party government, a pre-emptive indication of the notwithstanding clause.

Before a court could even look at the merits of the application they decided, let's lock the operation of the Charter, sections 2, 7, and 15: freedom of expression which goes to the heart of self-expression, of participation in our democracy and our communities, of freedom in our democracy; section 7, Mr. Speaker, the right to be safe and secure. Not just anyone to be safe and secure — kids. Not just any kids to be safe and secure, Mr. Speaker, particularly vulnerable kids. And section 15, equality under the law, non-discrimination.

They have pre-emptively invoked the notwithstanding clause so they could ram through this bill, so this bill can be operational notwithstanding the fact that they know full well that it unjustifiably violates the rights of children, their right to freedom of expression, their right to be safe and secure, and their right not to be discriminated against in their own school.

And they have also invoked the notwithstanding clause pre-emptively. That is before a court gets an opportunity to assess this law and its impact on the people of Saskatchewan with regards to *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*. Similar provisions in the Saskatoon . . . right code.

Interestingly, and a real contradiction, Mr. Speaker, this government has pre-emptively invoked the notwithstanding clause to ensure that this policy can be rammed through and operate notwithstanding the fact that it violates non-discrimination under the Sask human rights code on the basis of gender identity, which is a change that was brought in by a member of that side who, all signs are pointing to, are going to

stand in his place and actually vote for this garbage piece of legislation. The shame, Mr. Speaker, the shame.

I've lost my place in the letter. I'll start from paragraph 2: "It is my firm belief that every child . . ." This is again the letter from Kathleen McGourty:

It is my firm belief that every child, regardless of their gender identity or expression, deserves a safe and supportive learning environment where they can thrive and grow. The use of the notwithstanding clause to erode human rights, particularly those of trans children, is deeply troubling. By disregarding the fundamental rights and protections that have been put in place to ensure the well-being and dignity of all individuals, the government is sending a harmful message that goes against the values of inclusion and acceptance that we should be fostering in our schools and communities.

Trans children, like all children, should not have to face discrimination or harassment simply because of who they are. It is our responsibility as educators and as a society to protect and support them. The government's actions put the mental and emotional well-being of trans children at risk as they may now feel even more vulnerable and isolated in their own schools.

Furthermore, the government's decision places teachers like myself in an incredibly difficult position. We are committed to creating safe and inclusive classrooms where every student can thrive. However, when the government uses its power to undermine the rights of our students, it becomes increasingly challenging to fulfill our duty to protect and support them. The fear of legal repercussions for providing a safe and inclusive environment is deeply unsettling and hinders our ability to carry out our responsibilities effectively.

I urge you as our elected representative to take a stand against the use of the notwithstanding clause in this manner. Please use your voice. Please use your voice and influence to advocate for the protection of human rights, especially those of trans children. I believe it is essential for us to come together as a community and reject policies that discriminate against any group of people, especially our most vulnerable children.

I appreciate your time and consideration of my concerns. I hope that you will represent the values of inclusivity, fairness, and respect for all citizens, including trans children, in your work as an MLA.

Thank you, Kathleen McGourty, for that letter.

And here we see a reoccurring theme, Mr. Speaker. That this isn't just about the rights of trans children. This isn't just about the rights of children. When you have a government such as the Sask Party government that has demonstrated that they are willing to pre-emptively invoke the notwithstanding clause to trample the rights of children, it begs the question for all citizens of Saskatchewan: who are they coming for next?

Is it women who have a right to choose? Are they coming for

women, their health care, their reproductive choice? Is that who they're coming for next, Mr. Speaker? Are they coming for workers? Are they going to follow in the footsteps of Doug Ford? Are they going to take away the right to strike, the right to bargain, the right to having a say in your conditions of work? My money is on that might be who they're coming for next.

And that's why we saw, in a tremendous show of solidarity out on those steps, when voices from across the province in every sector — working people — came to support the LGBTQ2S+ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning, and two-spirit, plus] community in this fight against this pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause. There are coalitions forming, because people recognize that if the rights of children are not safe, no one's rights are safe. There are coalitions forming, Mr. Speaker, because people are recognizing that this fight is everyone's fight. Anyone who values their rights in a free and democratic society, they understand that under this government those rights are under threat. And I don't say that lightly, Mr. Speaker.

[10:30]

Or perhaps they're going to take a page out of Quebec's handbook. Again, the Premier has demonstrated such affection, such an affinity, for Quebec these days. And it's true; they are the primary invokers of the notwithstanding clause. And the last time they did it wasn't as they usually do it — at least the justification is — to protect the language rights of a minority in a majority context. They actually used the notwithstanding clause to target Muslim women who wear the hijab who occupy a public position. They used the notwithstanding clause pre-emptively to go after a minority. So that was a bit of a change.

And the parallels are stunning, not just in terms of the timing, the pre-emptive use. They're not even going to wait for the court to take a look at this. They're not even going to give the public, or they hope they're not going to give the public an opportunity to scrutinize this law, the courts to scrutinize it and look at exactly how this is going to impact students. They're not even going to do that, or they hope they aren't. I think probably they're mistaken. But that was certainly the aim by pre-emptively invoking the notwithstanding clause.

They're going to do it to go after and put at risk and suspend the Charter rights of a vulnerable minority. And these children are vulnerable on several levels. Not just because they're children. Not just because they haven't fully developed into adults; they're on that journey towards having fuller capacity, fuller understanding, more maturity. Not because these children in question, the ones that are going to be impacted by this are gender-nonconforming, and we've heard all the evidence about how they're at higher risk for mental health issues and for even suicidality. But because they can't vote, Mr. Speaker.

They actually currently have no mechanism available to them to hold this government to account, if they're operating under a government that has zero respect for the checks and balances offered by the courts — the third branch of our democracy — the courts that put checks and balances on this government.

If we're in a situation where we have a provincial government that doesn't respect the role of courts, then these children who

don't vote have absolutely no protection, no say, no ability to hold this government to account. You can't even say, oh, well if you don't like it, don't vote for it. They can't vote, Mr. Speaker. They can't vote.

Mr. Speaker, the next letter I received from a constituent is a letter by Dr. Emily Eaton, who is a department head, geography, at the University of Regina. She writes:

Dear Meara Conway:

I write today to voice my strongest opposition to the government's parental rights legislation and their use of the notwithstanding clause to force through their school policy. A judge has already granted an injunction to pause the implementation of this policy because of the irreparable harm it will cause to school-age children. You must help us stop the government's ideologically driven use of the notwithstanding clause to trample on the rights of our children.

I am a parent to a seven-year-old, a university educator, and a constituent of Regina Elphinstone. I support the human rights of all people, including children. I believe in the power of education to produce spaces and experiences of inclusion and belonging, and know the vital role that education plays in promoting the democratic values upon which free societies depend.

I want my child to feel safe to explore their gender and sexuality at the pace she chooses, in a community where she feels safe. I want to be part of that community, but know that her choice to include me depends on my actions; namely, how open I am to her questions and assertions and how safe I make our home and relationship. I do not need the government involving itself in the intimate details of my relationship with my child. I want the government to keep its hands off of my child, their body, their gender, and sexuality.

I asked my seven-year-old what she thinks of this policy, and she said it is not right for kids to be miserable because of their gender for their whole life. I hope this bad idea doesn't spread to other communities in the world.

I've taught many students who have been treated badly because of their sexuality and gender at the hands of parents, church leaders, and other authority figures who impose their own beliefs on children through fear and intimidation. These have long-lasting impacts that impinge on all aspects of a student's sense of self and their classroom learning.

A parent's single most important job is to raise a child that is at ease in the world, that knows how to treat themselves and others well. I support the vital role that teachers play in navigating gender and sexual identity in their classrooms, taking into account how a child identifies, protecting all children, providing an open space of respect and integrity for all, and involving parents in their children's education.

When interviewed by Stefani Langenegger, Scott Moe could not cite one example of the current policy causing a problem with a Saskatchewan parent. As the government

will have seen by now, there are thousands of parents who will stand up for keeping children safe by protecting their human rights and choices about how to identify and to whom.

Please help the government avoid making this grave mistake and causing an irreparable rift in Saskatchewan. We won't let the Sask Party get away with invoking the notwithstanding clause in order to harm our children. We will rise up.

Thank you for taking a principled stand in opposition to this terribly divisive and cruel policy.

Dr. Emily Eaton

I want to thank Dr. Emily Eaton for submitting the letter to be read into the record.

Another constituent, Zaul McClellan, he/him:

Dear Ms. Conway:

I'm writing to you as a concerned resident of your riding to express my deep disappointment and, frankly, fear regarding the recent legislative changes that have put transgender children in our province at risk.

The use of the notwithstanding clause to push through these policies is both concerning and controversial. The notwithstanding clause should be used sparingly and with great consideration for its impacts on individual rights and freedoms. Its use should be a last resort, only for situations where there's a compelling and justifiable reason to limit those rights in the broader public interest. It should not be used purely to score political points.

It certainly should not be used to push through legislation a government couldn't be bothered to write properly, and it definitely should not be used to hide the shortcomings of a flailing government.

No one in Canada should be able to take away someone's rights for these reasons, and I caution anyone who cheers this action. This is dangerous. This is a dangerous and unnecessary precedent. It is essential to recognize that every child in Saskatchewan deserves to grow up in an environment where they feel safe, supported, and free from discrimination. The recent policies not only fail to protect children but also send a harmful message that their rights and well-being are not a priority in Saskatchewan.

Transgender children already face numerous challenges in their lives, including higher rates of bullying, mental health issues, discrimination, abuse, and even suicide. The new policies only exacerbate these difficulties, potentially leading to further isolation and harm to some of the most vulnerable members of our community. I urge you to stand against the use of the notwithstanding clause and work towards more inclusive and supportive policies for transgender children. It is crucial that we protect their rights and ensure that they have access to the same opportunities and protections as their peers.

I kindly request that you use your position to advocate for policies that promote inclusivity, respect, and safety for all residents of Saskatchewan, regardless of their gender identity. Please urge the government to consider the well-being of transgender children and the long-term consequences of these policies on their lives.

If this government really wants to help children and families, please urge them to increase funding and supports for schools and mental health.

Thank you for your time and attention in this matter. I hope that together we can work towards a more inclusive and equitable Saskatchewan for all residents.

Sincerely,
Zaul McClellan

I want to thank Zaul McClellan for submitting that letter.

The next letter I'll read is from J. Wotherspoon, another constituent, I believe.

I speak to this issue wearing a number of hats. I'm a queer person living in Saskatchewan. I'm a parent to pre-teens and teens in the public school system. I'm a professional in the sexual reproductive health field. I'm a voter and a taxpayer. In all of these roles, this policy and the vitriol that surrounds it have been emotional.

Here are some things I need you to know. As a queer person who calls this place home, I need you to know that being queer is not just a sectioned-off piece of my personality that is only relevant in my romantic relationships. Queerness is an identity that I share with a community which collectively produces a culture. In the cultural norms of queer communities, the process of "coming out" is both a defining moment and an ongoing process. For young queer people, sharing your identity for the first time can be equal parts terrifying and liberating.

For most queer people, this is followed by a lifetime of risk assessment, of wondering when and where to come out to new situations and relationships, how much of yourself to share, and whether the spaces you're entering will be safe for you. Will this new doctor I'm seeing provide me with the care I need? Will my new employer respect my chosen family? Will my congregation still welcome me? Will there be a place for me to use the bathroom at this venue? Will I be attacked on the street? Will my parents still allow me to live with them?

This is why the process of coming out should always be driven by the person who is coming out. To pressure, push, or "out" someone before they are ready is without a doubt the most violent taboo one can commit within queer communities. Your pronoun policy takes that autonomy away from trans youth and forces queer educators to act against their cultural and community beliefs.

As a parent to youth aged 10 and 14 in the public school system, I need you to know that parenting is more responsibility than right. My rights as a parent include the

right to decide if and when to become a parent and the right to raise children free from persecution and violence. At no point should my rights be put above those of my children because my children are not my possessions and they are not extensions of my own identity. They are human beings. And as much as I would like to know about everything they do, they have the right to privacy. They have the right to decide when and how to share parts of themselves with me.

What is far more important than any right I may want to have is my responsibility to them, my responsibility to care for and nurture them into well-rounded and compassionate adults. My responsibility is to provide them space to experience and explore all that this world has to offer, including beliefs and cultures that are different from my own. My responsibility is to fight for their future and leave them with a world that is better than the one I came into. There is nothing in this proposed policy that recognizes or supports those responsibilities as a parent. I do not want these rights. I want my child's rights to be respected.

As a professional in the sexual and health field, I need you to know that this policy is already having negative effects on health outcomes for youth. Youth who no longer know where they can safely turn for support find themselves isolated and afraid. They can no longer trust that their GSA teachers and school counsellors can help them on their own terms, and I'm hearing from these youth that they simply are not engaging with these professionals.

I'm just going to pause for a second and repeat the anecdote that I shared yesterday, where a student came to me and said that on the first day, first day of high school I believe it was, they went into their classroom and their teacher said, look, if you're thinking about changing your name, changing your pronoun, I don't want to know. I'm not the person to talk to about that anymore. Imagine that, Mr. Speaker. That's the message that we're sending, that school is no longer a place where students can feel safe to explore who they are, can look to their teachers and other staff. Yeah, don't ask, don't tell.

And again while I was kind of disappointed to hear that this teacher would have done that, I kind of understand where they're coming from because there is so much confusion and so much uncertainty around this policy. So I can completely imagine that a teacher who is being pitted against a directive coming from on high that may result in you outing a student without their wishes, when something like that conflicts with your own moral compass, your professional ethics, your respect for human rights, you might just say, look, I'm tapping out, I'm tapping out.

[10:45]

I'll teach the curriculum, but I'm not going to be here for you in that way. How sad, Mr. Speaker, but completely understandable. I'll return to reading this letter:

Youth who no longer know that they were where they can safely turn for support find themselves isolated and afraid. They could no longer trust that their GSA teachers and school counsellors can help them on their own terms, and I'm hearing from these youth that they are simply nonengaging with these professionals.

And it sounds like some of these professionals are opting not to engage with them, Mr. Speaker, and I can see why.

Those supports that would be referral points to community-based services and to evidenced-based resources. Those supports that could include safety planning and crisis intervention for mental health. Those supports that could be the difference between an trans youth becoming another heartbreaking statistic or a healthy, happy adult.

To compound this, your policy makes it harder for teachers to provide health education that is relevant to all youth. If educators are no longer trusted adults in trans youths' lives, trans youth become invisible. This invisibility will lead to educators to assume that the lack of visibly or known trans students in their classrooms means that they do not need to provide health information about gender diversity, about trans bodies, about navigating primary health care as a trans person. This invisibility puts trans youth at risk of misinformation or disinformation online, of avoiding accessing medical care when they need it, of abuse and exploitation, and of isolation and depression that can lead to suicide.

Furthermore this province is facing multiple health crises, most of which are sexual and reproductive in nature. Nation-leading rates of syphilis, HIV, domestic violence, sexual assault, exploitation, drug poisoning — these are crises that do not discriminate, and we simply cannot afford to leave any community out of preventative education to address them.

Finally, as a voter and a taxpayer, I want you to know that I see you. I see you using trans youth and queer communities as political pawns in your campaign of hate and division. I see you pouring my tax dollars into stripping human rights away from children and youth while their classrooms crumble around them and 40 of their peers per room. I see you and I see the results of recent by-elections, provincial elections, and elections abroad where voters have rejected this kind of division in favour of collective, future building and positive approaches. I see you and so do the people of Saskatchewan.

I want to thank Julian for submitting that letter.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to read another letter from a constituent into the record. This is from Rhiannon Ward, pronoun she/her, constituent of Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

My name is Rhiannon and I'm writing from Regina Elphinstone-Centre. I have grave concerns about today's announcement regarding new school policies for sex ed and name and pronoun use at school.

I won't waste your time and mind talking about the vast research showing that straight forward sex education leads to fewer STIs and pregnancies among teenagers and give kids tools and language to speak about sexual abuse. I know that you're aware of that because the policy of having parents consent to sex ed is not even new. Highlighting it with this set of announcements is a clear attempt to invite more parents to opt their children out of receiving good sex

ed education. Instead I'll focus on the new policy of mandatorily outing queer and trans children.

I mentioned abuse above and it's again relevant here. You are opening children up to more and worse abuse with this policy. A child feeling safe at school among their teachers and peers to try new names and pronouns is not dangerous and does not require parental consent. If they do not feel safe at home to tell their family about this part of their life, informing the family anyway is dangerous. We know at this point that forcing kids to remain in the closet or be outted against their will leads to higher rates of homelessness, self-harm, suicide, and other unnecessary harmful outcomes.

This is an ideological move, meant to appease the far right in the Sask Party's base. It has absolutely no place in official education policy. You have already thrown our children to the wolves by allowing COVID to run wild, underfunding their schools, and continuing to fund religious schools at the expense of the public system. Fix your hearts and lift this policy immediately.

Mr. Speaker, I think one of the things that is striking about the letters that we received, that they are equal parts concern over this substantive policy itself and equal parts concern and dismay at this government's heavy-handed and anti-democratic tactics.

I want to return to some of the scholarship on the notwithstanding clause one more time before I wrap up. And again, I was sort of looking for this article last night but I wasn't able to find it. But again this is an article by Dr. Robert Leckey who is an expert in the notwithstanding clause, family law, constitutional law. And this is really an interesting article called "Advocacy notwithstanding the notwithstanding clause." And it really tracks the paradigm shift that we're experiencing across Canada today.

I think I mentioned . . . I went into it in more detail last night, that as of half a decade ago this notwithstanding clause had basically been collecting dust for over 35 years, except in Quebec. Quebec, again, a unique history there, shut out of those last-minute constitutional negotiations, the Night of the Long Knives, of course. Apart from Quebec, it basically collected dust for 35 years, and then we've just seen this flurry of activity around the notwithstanding clause from conservative provincial governments, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to quote from this article. Robert Leckey starts by identifying a paradigm shift. So he starts by defining the old framework or paradigm. I'll quote:

Let's start with what I'll call the old framework or paradigm.

So here he talks about how governments used to approach the notwithstanding clause, norms around the notwithstanding clause as of about half a decade ago. Over recent decades . . . This is a quote:

Over recent decades, legislators appear to assume the importance of individual rights and freedoms, that taking them into account was part of their job. Citizens going to court to enforce their rights might annoy governments, but they were acting legitimately, not as an enemy of the people. There was a sort of consensus against hasty recourse to the

mechanism which allows legislation to take effect despite or notwithstanding protected rights and freedoms. In the Canadian Charter, this mechanism is section 33, the notwithstanding clause.

To be clear . . .

And Robert Leckey goes into more detail about the old paradigm:

To be clear, under the old paradigm, entrenched rights and freedoms weren't absolute. We accepted limits on rights under the limitation clauses in section 1 of the Canadian Charter. We acknowledge that making an omelette requires breaking a few eggs.

So I remembered that quote last night, Mr. Speaker, because I'm pretty sure I heard him say it in class once. We already accept under the Charter that making an omelette requires us to break a few eggs. We already have a mechanism under the Charter for limiting rights, and we accept those limitations as a community, as a nation, as long as those limitations can be justified in a free and democratic society. I'll continue on:

We acknowledge that making an omelette requires breaking some eggs. Specifically we accepted reasonably, justifiable limits on rights where the overall benefit exceeds the law's harms.

Relatedly, under the old paradigm, one way of understanding the notwithstanding clause was that it gave the legislature a means by which to disagree with the Supreme Court on such line drawing. By this approach, the legislature would wait to lose in court before using the section 33 override.

Oh, what a concept, Mr. Speaker. Wait to lose in court first. Wait to have the eyes of the judiciary on this policy. Wait to hear the evidence. Wait to hear from the rights holders. Wait to hear from all those who have public interest standing, all those experts that get intervenor standing. Hear from the brilliant government lawyers about why this doesn't violate Charter rights, or in the case of the Sask Party the private bar lawyers that they're going to hire to fight this one. Wait to hear from them. Wait to hear from all these bright legal minds. Wait to hear from the affected parties. Read their affidavits. Cross-examine them. Hear from the experts in the field, the health experts, and then make a determination. What a concept, Mr. Speaker.

Returning to the article:

In other words, the notwithstanding clause allowed the legislature to give effect to a law that it — but not the court or a majority of its judges — viewed as setting a reasonable limit on one or more rights. It's early days, but I think we are moving into a new paradigm.

I believe this article was written in 2019. I'm going to suggest Dr. Robert Leckey was right about that. While we are maybe moving into a new paradigm in 2019, we are well into the thick of that new paradigm, Mr. Speaker. And when I say new paradigm, I mean a fundamental shift in how our duly elected governments approach a very powerful tool available to them under the Constitution that overrides the rights and freedoms of

minorities in this country. A dramatic shift, Mr. Speaker. This is serious business. So Robert Leckey writes:

It's early days [back in 2019] but I think we are moving into a new paradigm. I think so based on examples from our two most populous provinces. Under this new paradigm, governments will much more readily shield their rights-infringing laws from constitutional challenge. They may denigrate constitutional review by judges, characterizing it as illegitimate interference with a majority's will. Under the new paradigm, the government doesn't bother to claim that evidence justifies its policy choice or that its chosen path is proportionate in its harms and benefits.

Wow, these words could be written today about the Sask Party government and the Premier of Saskatchewan. They may denigrate constitutional review by judges. "Judicial overreach" is what the Premier tweeted, again taking a page out of Donald Trump's handbook, casting aspersions not only on this individual judge but on the entire institution, the only institution that offers checks and balances on a government intent on railroading the Charter rights of citizens.

Dr. Leckey goes into the first instance in Ontario. He then goes into the second instance in Quebec, and I'm going to pick up there:

The second instance of a government attacking Charter rights comes from Quebec. I refer of course to Bill 21, An Act respecting the laicity of the State.

Laicity is basically secularism, although it's more than that so it's hard to find an English word.

This law shunts aside as much of the Quebec Charter and Canadian Charter as possible. It does so to shield from constitutional strike-down measures, including a ban on religious symbols worn by many categories of public employees. The law prevents visibly religious people from being hired as teachers, principals, and government lawyers although there is a grandfather clause for employees who were in place by March 2019. It won't cover them if they accept promotion or reassignment.

Bill 21 also affirms that all persons have the right to lay government institutions and lay public services. This right underpinned the parents' demand in August for their children to switch classrooms to avoid exposure to the visibly religious teachers who are protected by the grandfather clause. In fact Bill 21 does much more, including amend the Quebec Charter and the province's constitutional foundations.

[11:00]

Let's try to grasp the magnitude of the paradigm shift. Given how events played out in Ontario, we see it most clearly in Quebec. The shift relates to timing and starting points. On timing, Bill 21 derogates from Charter rights pre-emptively, upstream of any conclusion by a trial court, let alone the Supreme Court, that it infringes a right.

Ten minutes. Ten minutes, Mr. Speaker, between Justice

Megaw's ruling asking that this policy be paused because someone could get hurt and the Premier's tweet that he was going to do it anyway. He was going to do it anyway. Here Dr. Leckey contemplates not only a trial on the merits, but an opportunity for that to go through the appeal process, maybe even up to the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal. Under this government, we didn't even get through the injunction phase. We didn't get to any trial on the merits of this legislation before that trigger-happy Premier invoked the notwithstanding clause. Shame, Mr. Speaker.

I'll continue:

Fundamentally, the government's message is that a majority shouldn't let Charter rights or courts get in their way. Now the litmus test is not the reasonableness of a limit on rights, but the comfort level of the majority. Tragically, Quebec's government no longer takes pride in the province's Charter of Human Rights, which was adopted years before the Canadian Charter. Government discourse in this province now regards protection of minorities as a federalist or multiculturalist intrusion that threatens the legitimate aspirations of the Quebec majority. In short, our assumption that political actors operate within a framework based on the importance of human rights no longer applies.

That is the paradigm shift that we're seeing play out in Canada, Mr. Speaker, a paradigm shift that started under a conservative premier in Ontario, continued under a conservative government in Quebec when they enacted a bill that clearly targeted Muslim women who wear the hijab. The only people that lost their jobs as a result of that bill were Muslim women who wear the hijab, an already vulnerable minority.

And that proud tradition is bravely being continued by the Premier of Saskatchewan as he goes where no Premier has gone before — a pre-emptive invocation of the notwithstanding clause in response to an injunction application in an effort to ram through legislation that will violate the rights of kids. Kids who can't vote and kids who are especially vulnerable, Mr. Speaker.

So again, not only are we concerned from the perspective of these kids who will face harm, not only are we concerned from the perspective of teachers and educators and staff who are being pitted against their own allegiance to human rights and their professional guiding ethics, not only are we concerned because this mess of a bill, this poorly and hastily drafted bill has not contemplated any of the on-the-ground impacts of what this will mean. We are concerned because what we're debating here this week goes to the very heart of our democracy and its strength and its health and its vibrancy, Mr. Speaker.

I'll return to Dr. Leckey's article: "Deciding that fundamental rights and freedoms don't need to be taken into account at all is a radical shift." A radical shift. "So radical," he writes, "it's disorienting." So radical it's disorienting.

But we need to acknowledge and adapt to our new reality. Those of us concerned about minority rights, those whose interests don't always align with those of the majority cannot afford to keep going as if the old rules still applied. Governments' willingness to derogate from rights without even cursory justifications for doing so calls us, as

advocates, to depart from business as usual. Advocates committed to defending fundamental rights and freedoms have a responsibility in face of these developments, and this whether your point of personal connection to be a minority, religion, language, sexual orientation, or something else.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Leckey continues. The premise of this article is that we used to do things one way but they're not playing by the old rules. So advocates, lawyers, courts — courts — will have to adapt. And that's what we've seen throughout the course of courts interpreting the Charter. That's why we call it a living and breathing document, because courts and judges have a way of returning some balance to our democracy. So when governments get a little too extreme, or a lot as we've seen in the case of the Sask Party, you could be sure that courts will step in and return some balance to our constitutional democracy. Because that is their role. That is their role.

Our democracy provides space, not only for an electorate to hold the government to account, not only for the civil service to maintain some independence and neutrality from elected members, but for courts to impose checks and balances on governments. And they have a proud history of doing so when power-hungry governments resort to heavy-handed, anti-democratic tactics to desperately distract from their record and hold on to power at all costs.

It's not a perfect system. I don't want to become a caricature of myself and stand up here and quote the old bulldog, Mr. Speaker. It's not a perfect system, but it's the one we have. And so far, with exceptions, it's been working pretty darn well — with exceptions of course.

Robert Leckey continues in his article:

The starting point is that whatever a government may do, courts make no corresponding choice to opt out of the business of protecting rights. Nor, given judicial independence and the courts' duty to uphold the Constitution, can a government conscript courts into collaborating in the enterprise of violating rights. I do not forget that section 33 is part of that Constitution.

Again, the courts are there to impose checks on state power, and they have and they likely will, Mr. Speaker.

He continues on:

As for our chief example, Bill 21 . . .

And again I'm just going to remind folks that this article was written before the Sask Party government obviously introduced Bill 137, which contains the pre-emptive invocation of the notwithstanding clause. So Robert Leckey is working from the most recent example of this, which was Quebec's Bill 21 which targeted Muslim women who wore hijabs in the public sector.

As for our chief example, Bill 21 was badly drafted. Amendments at the 11th hour made it worse. It has gaps, outright contradictions. Making this bill workable may not be a judge's job, especially after the government's insistence that judges should not interfere. For example, if the law is missing a workable definition of religious symbol,

judges should not step up to fashion one. I turn now to the particular doctrines and arguments.

Again, Mr. Speaker, there are parallels everywhere. We have before us a hastily and badly drafted document, one that even in the matter of less than a week we have members of the bar step forward to say, oh, oh, I don't think they thought this through. This is going to have an impact on family law, just the legal implications, let alone the violation of rights, the ideological question, the question whether this is right or legitimate. There are some serious legal questions here.

Yesterday, last night, I went through all of the ways in which this new policy directly contradicts that government's policies in corrections, in health, in the Ministry of Social Services. So they have created a scenario in this province where children in the classroom actually have fewer rights than children in corrections, children who are taken into care, children that are being treated in our health care system.

They did not think this through, Mr. Speaker. Hastily drafted, badly drafted, no concern for the impacts because this isn't about policy. This isn't about what's good for people. This is about partisan politics, that dirty business, Mr. Speaker. This is about shoring up the support that they bled during the Lumsden-Morse election, which terrified them. It terrified them and we see it. We see it.

We had child care providers in the gallery today. We had a number of seniors and their family members begging for them to be able to stay in their home, begging for this government to come to the table with a solution. We have a federal child care agreement, money on the table, a mandate, the will to create child care spaces and \$10-a-day daycare.

But even the low-hanging fruit, as they call it, the low-hanging fruit in creating those regulated spaces — that's the words of the former minister of Education and his deputy minister, low-hanging fruit — the ones that are those low-hanging fruit are getting letters from this ministry saying sorry, we can't help you; we don't know when we're going to be able to help you because we're short-staffed.

They're not tending to the very basics of governing. They're not tending to the very basics of governing. They are singularly focused, Mr. Speaker, singularly focused on heading off at the pass any possibility of a split on the right because they know that that is the biggest threat in a two-party system to their grasp on power. This is all about holding onto power, doing it at all costs, doing it, whatever it takes.

And again, I had to give them props yesterday, Mr. Speaker, because they still have that ability to surprise us. I never thought they'd go so far as to pre-emptively invoke the notwithstanding clause to steamroll over the rights — the right to freedom of expression, the right to be safe, the right to non-discrimination of vulnerable kids. I never thought I'd see them go to that extent to desperately hold onto power at all costs. I mean, they clearly will do anything it takes. And by anything I mean absolutely anything. Everything is on the table. Everything is on the table.

[11:15]

Although . . . Like I'm fighting my desire to go more deeply into the weeds on the notwithstanding clause, but I think probably the best thing for me to do is to wrap up pretty soon here. I think I have one more letter that I'd like to read into the record.

I want to take a moment to thank all those from across the province who submitted letters to the official opposition. We received hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of letters. That's a true statement and we can back it up, Mr. Speaker. We can back it up with actual words and letters and names and sentiments, unlike the members opposite, who pointed to millions of parents but we don't know who they are. We don't know where they are. We don't know what they're saying.

This is a letter from . . . And I want to also add, Mr. Speaker, that I apologize to anyone if I left your letter out. We did our best to cover everyone, but it's been a bit of a whirlwind so mistakes could have been made. Megan Moore, Regina Elphinstone-Centre:

To Meara Conway and Nathaniel Teed:

My name is Megan. I'm currently a resident in Regina. Meara, you are the MLA for my riding and I hope this letter finds both you and Nathaniel well.

I'm writing to you today with great concern for the upcoming return to legislature scheduled for October 10th and the Saskatchewan Party's intention to present legislation and utilize the notwithstanding clause to violate the rights of transgender, nonconforming children in our province. I am also concerned about the precedent that is being set for any transgender, nonconforming folks who call our province home and worry that their rights only exist when they are deemed "appropriate."

I would like to start by saying that I too believe that parents should be involved in their child's life. I have worked in education for over a decade and have seen the benefit of parental involvement. Parents, guardians often know their child best, their likes and dislikes, lived experience, what tools can be used to uplift their student in the classroom, and should work together with their teacher, the focus always being the child, their education, safety, and success. This is always the goal. Each child is unique as they have individual experiences, knowledge, and perspectives. Children are full of light and potential and we all agree that they fundamentally deserve protection.

Growing up, my father suffered from addiction and regularly beat my mom. I saw the bruises and the cuts. She wore long sleeves and makeup year-round because she feared for her life if anyone found out. I distinctly remember one night when I was eight years old. I snuck out of my room because I heard my dad screaming at my mom and witnessed him throwing a kitchen chair at her. She moved from its path, and I watched as the chair shattered against the wall.

While he never physically hurt my brother or I, we were victims of emotional abuse. He would purchase us lavish gifts and sell them weeks later to feed his addiction. He

would tell us that our mom forced him to sell our gifts. There would be weeks where we only had \$20 for groceries and watched our mom go to bed hungry so she could keep my brother and I's belly full.

He refused to let my mom work, yet blamed her for our poverty. I spent the better part of my childhood listening to my dad degrade my mom, making me feel unsafe. When my parents finally separated, my dad remarried a woman who I walked in on sitting across my brother's chest, pinning his arms, punching him in the face over and over and over. He was 10 years old.

I share this story to say not all homes are safe. [Not all homes are safe.] It is clear to me that what is being missed in the discussion about parental rights and children's gender identities is that not all parents act in the best interests of their children. The Government of Saskatchewan seems to be aware of this. They have a web page titled "Child Abuse and Neglect" that directly outlines types of abuse and actions the reader can take to safeguard the child being impacted.

We see the government's understanding that not all parents are safe spaces for their children, with an entire ministry that is largely dedicated to safeguarding children, the Ministry of Social Services. We see their acknowledgement of this in the provincial duty to report that requires anyone who suspects a child is being harmed to report it to the Ministry of Social Services immediately, and failure to do so may have significant consequences.

The Government of Saskatchewan has many safeguards in place that recognize that a child's home life may not be one free from abuse or harm. We cannot work on the assumption that all parents, like my dad, have my best interests in mind.

In the above examples, the safety of the child remains at the centre regardless of parent or guardian opinion. There seems to be a fundamental understanding that some parents cause harm, and that in those cases we need to go above the parent to ensure the child is safeguarded.

Every child has a different lived experience, perspective, and understanding. This means that every child is unique and requires different support. This new policy that is focused on parental rights is in stark opposition to the government's safeguards listed above, as they actively place trans kids in harm's way by forcing them to either: (1) use their dead name/dead pronouns — there's vast peer-reviewed research that showed that this not only increases a youth's risk of depression and anxiety but also risks of suicide — or (2) inform their parents against the youth's wishes. Again, there is vast research showing that youth who identify as trans in an unsupportive household face significant rates of physical abuse, emotional abuse, and even homelessness.

Both of these options will have devastating impacts on these children who deserve to be safeguarded from their parents in the case that if their parents poses this risk. This is something that we already recognize as being a reality for youth, and it is no different for trans youth. Instead,

enforcement of this legislation and policy would result in increased rates of child abuse, child suicide, and child homelessness.

I understand that gender and gender identity make many people uncomfortable, but this discomfort cannot drive policy and legislation. The court injunction should be enough to cause pause and prompt reflection. Instead the Government of Saskatchewan chose to double down, knowing that this policy was written in haste to appease those who would see harm come to trans kids. I believe it is the government's duty to ensure they are making decisions that are based on fact, are well researched, and are in the best interests of their constituents. This policy achieves none of that, yet will have dire consequences.

Children who are in safe, loving homes likely already have informed their parents. And if they haven't, that's their decision to make. The consequence of the school reporting this to the loving family will be minimal, and are not those who need protection. Indeed, it is the children who already know their family isn't safe, those who already know that coming out will cause them harm, that will be impacted. These are the only children whose lives will change as a result of this policy and legislation and not for the better. These are the children we need to protect.

Government policy and legislation should not be written from a place of emotion or personal belief, but should be centred on making our province a better place for everyone who lives here and be informed by modern research and practice.

This policy and subsequent proposed legislation will appease those who are deeply misinformed about gender identity while placing trans children directly in harm's way. There is no excuse for this anymore when the research is readily available online for the Government of Saskatchewan to reference organizations that are keen and willing to share their knowledge and expertise, and trans folks who can speak to the direct impact of actions like these.

The utter arrogance that the Government of Saskatchewan has shown in thinking that, informed by a mere 18 letters, they know better than child psychologists, gender researchers, the trans community, the Saskatchewan Children's Advocate is frankly terrifying. All of these experts and professionals urging the Government of Saskatchewan to reconsider, including a court injunction, leaves me feeling like our government is taking the action for a different reason.

Any reasonable working professional, when given feedback, is encouraged to take a moment to reflect. In this case, those who should be taking pause are Scott Moe and the Government of Saskatchewan. If it was truly for the safety of the children, the feedback and concerns shared from the long list of experts and professionals who are experienced in gender and child welfare would be regarded. Instead I am writing this letter, afraid of what is coming next.

Overriding the protected rights of children sends a terrifying message to those who fall outside the accepted norm, that their rights mean nothing. It tells us that if we make too much noise fighting for equity, we will be stripped of our rights. This policy opens the door to roll back rights for the rest of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, bodily autonomy, and more.

I am fortunate to have trans kids who I love. I know trans kids who are beautiful and vibrant. They deserve to be loved. They deserve to have their whole selves celebrated. They deserve to be protected from those who would see them harmed, even if those people are their parents.

No one person can know everything. That is an impossible standard to achieve. I would implore the Government of Saskatchewan to act with humility, with pause, and listen, which they are not. We need to be better than this. We need to make informed decisions even if we don't agree with them. We don't need to understand why someone may change their pronouns or ask to be addressed by a different name. But it is simple and life-saving to respect it.

Megan,
Regina, Saskatchewan

And I thank Megan Moore for submitting that very thoughtful letter.

Mr. Speaker, it will be a surprise to no one that I certainly won't be supporting this bill. Again I'm concerned at a pattern of behaviour from the Sask Party government. They've demonstrated an anti-democratic bent, not only through the preemptive use of the notwithstanding clause to violate the rights of children, not only through the decision to do it before a court can even look further at this matter and inform the electorate about what this legislation will actually mean for the people of this province, but they've done it in such a way that abbreviates our ability to scrutinize and debate a very important issue.

I've done my best to bring forward the concerns of my constituents, to speak to the impacts of this bill on my critic areas, and I'm proud to stand with this official opposition in unequivocally opposing Bill 137. So with that, I would move to adjourn debate . . . sorry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Teed: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I want to say a huge thank you to my colleague from Regina Elphinstone-Centre for putting so many, so many thoughtful arguments forward on Bill 137. I want to thank my colleagues who've spoken before me. Our Education critic, the member for Saskatoon Eastview, who again just went through so many documents, went through so many thoughtful arguments as to why Bill 137 is not something that we should be moving forward with in Saskatchewan.

[11:30]

Mr. Speaker, as many of my colleagues have said, usually when we stand in this House we say that we are honoured to speak to

legislation. You know, whether we agree or disagree or agree to disagree, as legislators it's our job to stand here, and we are fortunate to be here to raise the voices of our communities. But, Mr. Speaker, today I am not honoured to speak to this bill. I am not honoured to speak to Bill No. 137, *An Act to amend The Education Act, 1995 respecting parental rights*.

The last couple of weeks have been heavy. Honest, I'm being honest here. When the government chooses to come after members of your community, it's not easy. Especially when they are coming after your community after so many years of hard-fought movement on human rights. When they decide that for political gain they are going to target vulnerable members of your community.

And I say, my community. While I am not a trans person, I am a gay man. I represent one letter under that rainbow. Two-spirit, "l" for lesbian, "g" for gay, "b" for bisexual, "t" for trans, and over the years we've added other letters to recognize community members under this rainbow: intersex folks, questioning folks, queer folks. We add the plus sign at the end as we know that as we develop, as we learn, as we add language, we will know that other communities will join on. There are a lot of communities that we share this rainbow umbrella with.

And so when I say that the government is choosing to attack vulnerable members of my community, I am specifically speaking to queer and trans youth. That is what we're talking about today, a government that has decided that they will target queer and trans youth for political gain.

We've mentioned in this Chamber that trans youth represent 0.79 per cent of the population. Less than 1 per cent of our population is being targeted today in an emergency debate, the first emergency debate in 25 years.

This government sought to bring this Chamber back, to pay the salaries of everyone in this building, to have an emergency debate to pass a bill that will target queer and trans youth. And they are going to use the notwithstanding clause to ensure that that bill will not be challenged in the courts. That's what we're doing here today. And that's what I mean by coming after my community.

Mr. Speaker, I will always stand up for members of my community. I will never take letters off and separate people out. That is not something I will ever, ever do as a queer person, as a gay man. Those members of my community are my siblings, and I will always, while I'm in this Chamber, stand here and speak up for them.

So through this process, the one thing I've come back to is when things like this happen, I've been telling folks, one of the silver linings of when your human rights are targeted, is that you get to see your community. You get to gather with your community. You get to see the vibrancy of your community. And I'm going to mention it later but I want to say it now: the one thing that has really buoyed me through this experience is that even when we're rallying on the steps of the legislature for our very basic human decency, there are smiles. There is joy. There is joy still out there. And when we gather together, we find that joy. There were hugs. There are smiles. Of course, there's tears.

The one moment when a trans individual was giving a speech to the rally in front of the legislature, and a father yelled from within the crowd, “That’s my child.” The pride. I am not usually a crier, Mr. Speaker. I think it actually is a problem that I have and I need to work through, but moments like that hit right here. You know, that’s when it tries to get through some of the armour you’ve built up trying to be stoic, trying to be strong, trying to be a rock for your community. But the moments like that, that’s one that hits really hard.

And so here we are today. So far yesterday we debated for 14 hours in this Chamber, 14 hours. That is something. And members of this official opposition have been pulling that weight. They’ve been, so far — minus one statement from the Minister of Justice — have been the only members to engage in this debate. My colleague from Saskatoon Eastview spoke for seven hours. My colleague from Saskatoon Fairview, four hours. My colleague from Regina Elphinstone-Centre, five-plus? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . We’re saying six, six hours on the floor of this Chamber, while many members deigned not to listen.

That’s what really also just gets you too, is when you’re bringing these thoughtful arguments, thoughtful letters, and folks just choose not to listen. I’ll remind the government that they are part of the government that decided to ram through rule changes so that we would be debating this from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. So you signed on. You said yes in a caucus meeting. Maybe the cabinet came. You said yes, we’re going to do it. Let’s be here for 14 hours a day to ram through a piece of legislation that we know will cause irreparable harm for children.

So yesterday we’re halfway through the day and of course, you know, at some point, we’re all human. We start to feel it. But what really buoyed me yesterday was I was sitting here. I was listening to the member from Saskatoon Fairview. And I swivelled my chair around and lo and behold, the gallery that the government looks at every day was filled with queer youth, with trans youth, with gender-diverse youth, and their allies, and some parents too who came out. They marched down here from their schools. They sat in this gallery and they watched. They looked this government in the eye as they propose a bill that will likely cause their peers, some of them, irreparable harm.

And it’s been kind of interesting that, you know, I stood out . . . After seeing this group of children, I went out onto the steps of the legislature and I met with some of those children. And a number of Saskatchewan Party MLAs walked by, didn’t acknowledge the group. But my colleagues were out there chatting with those kids, making sure that, you know, checking in. And we had allies there keeping an eye on that pack, making sure that those kids were doing okay.

So I want to do a quick shout-out to some of those youth. We were chatting and said, will you give us a shout-out in the legislature? I said absolutely. So I want to give a shout-out to a number of those youth, primarily from Balfour and Sheldon. I’m going to give shout-out to Ruby; Matias; Eve; Renn, who we’ll hear from in just a moment; Alyx; Brutus; Maxwell; Mackenzie; and Sam. Thank you so much for coming to your Legislative Assembly. I wish I could be introducing you in this Chamber right now, but that’s your shout-out.

And of course whenever vulnerable communities gather to

defend their human rights, to make their voices heard, someone of course has to show up and interject and tell them like, why are you here? You’ve got it fine. I’m going to heckle you. I’m going to ask you questions. Hey, Mr. Politician, what do you think about these kids skipping school to be here on the steps of the legislature? That’s shameful. And I said, you know what? The day that your human rights are being violated, the day that the government decides to pass a bill with a notwithstanding clause taking away your human rights, I think that’s a good enough day to skip school. And that’s what I said to that person on a bicycle who decided that they had to bike by and check in on a group of kids, heckle a group of kids.

Because of course someone always has to have an opinion on your human rights. And that’s what we’re kind of seeing today: an opinion from a government that, you know, that we know of, has absolutely no 2SLGBTQ+IA [two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning plus, intersex, and asexual] members within their caucus, from a government who took no time to engage with that community. And, Mr. Speaker, I will prove that. It’s been proven in court. I will bring it up again in just moments. No time to engage that community.

So that’s what brings us here. And you know what? I want to say a big kudos to the media recently. Articles have been flying out the door on this topic. And I’ve got two here that I think really set the stage for what I want to talk about today.

The first one is an article from the CBC entitled, “Sask says parents should know when children transition. One family says their story proves us wrong. Students across Regina walked out of class on Tuesday to protest Saskatchewan pronoun policies.” This was written by Alexander Quon and features one of the students who I gave a shout-out to earlier, Renn Roberts. So I’ll quote here:

Renn Roberts says that Saskatchewan’s new pronoun policy is not a good idea, saying it will stop children in the province from experiencing the support Roberts was able to receive as a transgender student at school.

The grade 10 student at Balfour Collegiate said that the provincial government is choosing to not trust youth by invoking the notwithstanding clause to override the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* in order to protect its policies from legal challenges.

Renn is quoted in this article as saying:

“School is supposed to be a safe space, and it was for me when I first came out. I came out at school before I came out at home, and that was . . . it was like an escape for me,” said Renn who is 15. “I was able to try things out and really make sure that I was confident in myself before I told other people and now that’s not an option anymore.”

Saskatchewan’s Bill 137 will require teachers and school employees to seek permission from parents or guardians before using the “new gender-related preferred name or gender identity” of a student under the age of 16.

The article goes on saying:

The bill would have changed Renn's experience at school, even though it was a decision that the teenager and their father believe is exactly what was needed.

"I wanted to try out my name in school before I really felt sure of it, because I didn't just want to cause any confusion, and mostly I didn't want to get outed. So I started at school because it was the safest option," said Renn.

[11:45]

Renn said they believe their parents would support them, but were afraid how members of their extended family would react.

Blair Roberts said he can understand why parents want to be involved in their children's lives. Blair said he immediately felt sad once he found out that Renn had first told a teacher about transitioning.

He says:

"Once I put my ego aside and recognize that it's not about what I need, it's about what my kid needs to feel safe and secure, it was very easy for me to see what happened and be grateful to their teacher for honouring their request not to talk to us," he told CBC. "In our view, we're just grateful for that safe place for our kid, and it's really sad that the Saskatchewan Party is trying to take that away from them."

Renn said frustration over the legislation left them with little choice but to take part in a student walkout on Tuesday. The protesters opposed the provincial government and its incoming legislation, which is all but guaranteed to pass due to the Saskatchewan Party's majority in the legislature.

Approximately two dozen students walked out from Balfour Collegiate while students from Dr. Martin Leboldus Catholic High School, Campbell Collegiate, and F.W. Johnson Collegiate, and other schools also took part. The students gathered at the provincial legislature to show their displeasure with the provincial government.

Alex Perron, 16, was one of the other students from Balfour Collegiate that took part in the walkout. When Perron transitioned, they were able to do so while supported by their family and friends. Others were not so lucky, he said.

"That's why before I came out to my parents, being able to go by my name and pronouns that I did at school did so much for my mental health," Perron said.

Renn said coming out isn't easy and it carries risks. "I know what it's like to be outed. It's not safe," they said. "Certain people's families kick them out. They could hurt them. They could be verbally, mentally, or physically abusive. It's really not safe to just out people like that."

In Renn's view, that's exactly what will happen under this legislation. "It's made my existence a lot more controversial than it used to be. I used to be able to just kind of go around and be another student and now I have to be this advocate. And I feel this pressure to advocate for people who can't

advocate for themselves," they said.

Now I think we're talking about the father:

Blair is an employee of the John Howard Society of Saskatchewan, which is an intervenor in the court case that attempted to challenge the provincial policy. Blair said that he cannot be more proud of his child and the others who decided to walk out on Tuesday.

"These kids should not be the one to bear the burden of this harmful policy through. It's frustrating to me that this pressure has to be put on my kid, it has to be put on all of these kids."

Regina Public Schools and Regina Catholic Schools said any child who made the decision to walk out of class on Tuesday will be marked as absent. The division will not implement any other special procedures in response to the protest.

End article.

Mr. Speaker, I think that article really encapsulates so much of what I hope that I will get across today in my remarks on Bill 137. I have another article but I think maybe I'll save it at the moment. It's entitled, "Regina students walk out of class in protest of Saskatchewan pronoun legislation."

And as I was kind of thinking about this, I had been holding a copy of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission's "Human Rights of Transgender People." At the top of this document it says, "Be code smart. The best way to protect yourself from discrimination and from complaints is to know and respect *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*" — I think, a statement that this government should be taking into account.

I need not remind this government that they were the ones who, with unanimous consent of this legislature, brought gender identity, gender expression into *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*. This document goes into an explanation of the law, the law and legal precedent, the duty to accommodate, undue hardship, confidentiality of information. That's interesting. I'm not going to go through the whole document, but an important one, I think, for everyone in this Chamber to look over as they move forward in legislation that will effectively rip up this piece of paper.

So we're here today to discuss Bill 137, *An Act to amend The Education Act, 1995 respecting parental rights*, enshrining in legislation education policy *Use of Preferred First Name and Pronouns By Students*, that a court has paused using an injunction while the issue is before the courts.

I kind of titled little sections of this speech. This one's called opening unpleasantries. It was originally called pleasantries, but I didn't think that pleasantries was exactly how I felt about it.

So right after Thanksgiving, we decided that — well I guess not we — the government decided that we would call back the legislature for an emergency session — as I mentioned, the first in 25 years — to introduce this bill which will include the notwithstanding clause pre-emptively as the policy was granted

an injunction, was paused by a court.

And instead of waiting to see that process through, the government, as my colleague from Regina Elphinstone-Centre . . . This conservative government here in Saskatchewan — although it might be a misnomer to call them a conservative government, the way they raise taxes on the people of this province — but this conservative government, in line with other conservative governments in Canada which, again we noted, have been the only governments in Canada to use the notwithstanding clause, aside from Quebec . . . They're a special situation. We'll talk about them in a moment.

But they know. This government knows. They brought in the human rights. They have lawyers on their benches. They brought in the human rights code for gender identity and gender expression. They know that this policy and this legislation will infringe upon the rights of children to gender identity and to gender expression.

So we've got a bill, Bill 137, and it's laying out requirements for teachers and principals to receive written consent from parents when students under the age of 16 want to go by a gendered name or pronoun. Students will be forced to engage with their parents, not on their own schedule, but with the schedule now of forcing schools to do this, to be their authentic selves.

So as Renn mentioned, whereas school was a safe space to figure out who they were, won't be the case. If you want to be your authentic self in a Saskatchewan school, you have to tell your teacher, and that teacher has to get a signed consent form from your parents. So they're essentially . . . The government is now legislating the coming out of queer and trans youth across the province. Why don't we just call the legislation back?

So they introduced this legislation. It's paused by the courts. Experts, provincial Children's Advocate, a Justice, community leaders, community-based organizations, and queer and trans activists have been united under one thought on this bill. They're united under the thought that this bill will roll back the human rights of children, specifically the human rights of queer and trans children in Saskatchewan schools.

And it is in direct contravention of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and is in direct contravention of *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* for gender expression and identity, hence the government's reactionary use of the rarely used notwithstanding clause. The policy would essentially force teachers to non-consensually out their students if they want to be their authentic selves.

I want to be very clear as we enter into this debate, and we've been clear from the start. Our leader's been clear, day one. We will never come between you and your child. I know that children do better when their parents or guardians are involved in their education, involved in their lives. I want that for every single child in this province. This is something that everybody in this Chamber can agree on. We can all agree on that topic.

But I will be clear if I haven't been clear already. I will always stand up for queer and trans students. I will always stand up for the queer and trans community, for my community. I will always stand up for the most vulnerable in our society, especially when

they're being targeted by politicians, targeted for political gain or showmanship or a political smokescreen to distract from an abysmal record.

Bill 137 will actively discriminate against one of the most vulnerable segments of our population: queer, gender-diverse, and trans children, a minority within a minority. I say a minority within a minority because as I've mentioned, trans people represent 0.79 per cent of the population. That means that this bill that we have called back this legislature to have an emergency session on to debate will apply to less than 1 per cent of the kids in our schools. It means that 99 per cent of students who are not transgender, who are not gender-diverse, who do not identify as queer or LGBTQ+ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and/or questioning, plus], those students who are not going to be using different pronouns, this legislation will have nothing to do with them.

Bill 137 is simply targeting that minority within a minority, and it will have negative effects. It will have consequences for this minority. And I will speak to those struggles later — not happily, Mr. Deputy Speaker — but I will speak to the struggles of that community in just a moment, struggles that will be heightened by this legislation. Again, and we say it, this government has been so out of touch, so interested to distract from their abysmal record that they have recalled the legislature and put forward an emergency debate on something that will target 0.79 per cent of the population.

Now the government will say that this is about connecting you to your child. But no matter how they spin this legislation, this legislation won't do that. The parental bill of rights amendment to *The Education Act* will not bring you closer to your child. This will not help you engage with your child's educational journey.

This Saskatchewan Party government has failed Saskatchewan children and their parents time and time again through years of successive funding cuts. Why? Because zero consultation was done to create this initial policy and subsequent legislative amendment bill. Parents . . . No matter how hard the Education minister tries to spin "tens of thousands of parents reached out to me," he has not sat down with a single parent to create this bill. The government did not sit down with a single stakeholder group involved. The government did not follow their educational consultation requirements in formation of this policy. This has been a completely top-down approach.

And this was all proven in court, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where the Ministry of Education stated that this policy was developed in eight days using 18 letters, of which seven identified as parents. The government can point to no one parent who is surprised by their child using a different name. Neither the Premier, nor the Minister of Health can corroborate.

In fact the day of the cabinet shuffle, when the new Education minister was doubling down on his policy in the media, the media talked to the Minister of Health who said he could not point to a single example, that no one had come forward. He had never heard about this. The same day. Get the story straight if you're going to say that parents are involved, that tens of thousands of parents have reached out and said that this is exactly what I want you to do: target those trans kids, the unknown of the trans kids. I don't know about them. I don't understand that whole situation.

And this, this is just something I don't agree with. Go ahead. Attack.

[12:00]

No. No one. No one can say that.

Stefani Langenegger on the CBC News, in an interview, the Premier again could not point or say to a single . . . He couldn't point to a single person that they were surprised by their child wanting to use a different name or pronoun. Not a single one. Not a single parent on the public record. Not a single consulted parent.

All that the Bill 137 will do is force teachers and principals to non-consensually out queer and trans kids to their parents if they want to use "gender-related" names or different pronouns effectively — as, you know, we've kind of looked at effectively — or you're asking teachers to break their own code of conduct. When children confide in a teacher about who they are, that teacher will be placed in the most terrible of positions.

And my colleagues have canvassed how this legislation flies in the face of Social Services' requirements. So are we going to get amendments and start throwing this into Social Services? Are we going to get amendments and throw this into the criminal justice system? Because this policy flies in the face of every other policy that this government has in place in those areas. And I hate to give the government ideas, but I would love to give my community more motives to get down here and continue to fight for their rights.

It's just shameful, placing teachers in that position. As if they're not already overworked enough, trying their hardest, pouring their heart and soul into everything that they do. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have an education degree. I worked as an educational assistant. I sub taught. I have a lot of people in my life who are teachers. And I see how hard they work, how many hours they put into working on lesson plans, on liaising with parents.

You know, my colleague from Saskatoon Eastview mentioned . . . He is so connected to his children. One of the biggest fallacies of this legislation is that, is the government saying that teachers aren't doing that already? There are so many ways parents can be connected to their students. They basically know everything that's going on — there's a lesson coming up, if a test is coming up, what they're writing a paper on — it's there; it's available.

And those teachers are working long hours after the day to plan. They're taking changes in the schedule and rolling with it and making new lesson plans to accommodate. They're taking on student teachers and raising the next generation of teachers. They're doing that. They're doing extracurricular activities. Every day there's something. Every teacher. And you know, I have many teacher colleagues sitting on these benches who know that too.

And we all know, and I've talked to those teachers, we all know that Bill 137 will not bring you to closer to your child's education. Why? I want to be perfectly clear about what this bill will not do.

Number one . . . I may not number these. Start with one, yeah.

This bill will not make your child's classroom size any smaller. It will not increase the supports in your child's classroom.

This Bill 137 has no financial attachments. It will not hire more teachers. It will not hire more educational assistants in our schools.

Bill 137 will not improve test scores. It will not bring more resources. It will not open new science labs, music rooms, art rooms, gymnasiums. It will not bolster your child's experience in school in any way. It will not open new schools bursting at the seams. It will not provide any dollars for renovations of the schools in each and every one of our ridings.

Bill 137 will not increase per-student funding. It will not feed the students who come to school on an empty stomach.

Bill 137 will not increase the "ample support" by increasing the amount of counsellors, psychologists, and social workers walking the halls of the schools again in each and every one of our ridings. Mr. Speaker, it will not bring back teacher-librarians and library technicians. It will not turn the lights back on in those school libraries across the province that spend more time with the lights off that they do with the lights on.

Mr. Speaker, it was one of the biggest shocks that I experienced entering the education system as a student teacher and as an EA [educational assistant] and as a substitute teacher was that you'd lock the library in a school. And I did my internship in Delisle, Saskatchewan. And you'd go to the door at the library — lights were off; door is locked. And I was like, okay, well how am I supposed to bring kids down to this library? Oh well, we'll get you the key and we'll book the time so that we can shuffle an educational assistant out of their job so that they can be down there to teach you how to scan the books out, and maybe we'll get them to come in and we'll do the scanning the books out for you but, if not, you can handle that. Yes, absolutely. I'm competent. So I get the key, we take the kids down and we open up the library — amazing, so many cool books. Love it. All the kids get books. We lock the door behind us. Those students don't have access to that.

When I was in school, like that was a . . . The door was always open. Libraries are another one of those safe spaces. And I know that this government has taken target on libraries in the past. No, not fans of information, not fans of knowledge, not fans of critical thinking, because heaven forbid someone learn that their government's not really taking care of them.

So yeah, libraries, safe spaces for students to go in, learn something about themselves, gain critical thought, meet a wonderful teacher-librarian or library technician who can walk them through that. Maybe that was the person that they confided in. Maybe that was the safe space and the safe person in their life. Now they're gone. And my colleague from Saskatoon Eastview canvassed that quite specifically. I don't have the numbers in front of me . . .

An Hon. Member: — 80 per cent reduction.

Mr. Teed: — 80 per cent reduction of teacher-librarians and library technicians. That's across the board.

I represent a riding in Saskatoon. We represent ridings across Saskatchewan. Those numbers hit every single one of our ridings. They hit every single student in every single riding of a person represented here, Mr. Speaker. It's a huge loss. Bill 137 will not reopen the libraries. They will not rehire library technicians. I could talk about this all day, but I'm going to keep going.

Bill 137 will not enhance extracurricular activities. It won't help teachers engage in more place-based educational opportunities. It will not increase mental health outcomes of students in our schools. In fact, for the folks that it's targeting, it will decrease those mental health outcomes. It already is doing it. Kids are already seeing this happen. They know suddenly that it's time to — as we mentioned — don't ask, don't tell. Don't talk to a parent. Don't talk to an adult in your life who you might think is safe, because that person may have to non-consensually out you under the government's policies that will pass this Chamber using the notwithstanding clause to shield it from any court challenges. It will pass.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 137 will not improve the lives of students in Saskatchewan in any way. Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing is a Premier and government who have called the Legislative Assembly back for an emergency session to rush through a bill that will not make your child's education experience better.

To make matters worse, we have a government that is really so willing to discriminate, they have changed the rules of this House to do so, attacking our very democratic tradition to ram through a bill and use the notwithstanding clause to enshrine a policy that will cause irreparable harm to students. We couldn't do that in the regular sitting, let's bring it back, let's do it in a special emergency sitting.

This bill will roll back the human rights of children. Mr. Speaker, another fact that this government does not want to address: that children have rights. That's why the judge ruled on this injunction on this policy. Mr. Speaker, we are seeing a government that is actively trying to take away the rights of children, and this legislation will do that using the notwithstanding clause. The notwithstanding clause, the nuclear option, to force through this.

They are saying, never mind to your Charter of Rights and Freedoms, never mind to *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*. Mr. Speaker, it's just so . . . It could not be more clear to me that this really is no longer about transparency with parents. Because their actions on education have made things worse.

I've listed all the things that this bill will not do. We are not having an emergency session to enhance the education of children. So as I mentioned before, I'm not honoured to stand and talk to this, but I will stand and do my duty as a legislator in defence of human rights, in defence of the most vulnerable in our province, especially the queer and trans community of which I am a part.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to this Bill 137, *An Act to amend The Education Act, 1995 respecting parental rights*. But I want to take just a quick, quick moment to just say a special thank you to so many folks who have come out to speak against this bill, to rally. I want to thank my family, my friends, my

community who have supported me. I want to thank this caucus that have stood firm since day one. Couldn't have asked for a better crew of allies. So proud to stand here today.

So I think for argument's sake, what I would like to do is go through a little timeline of events of how we got here. How did we get here to this emergency session of our legislature? So on August 22nd, the Ministry of Education announced new parental inclusion consent. So my colleagues will probably get mad at me because I probably jinxed this. But I thought to myself, wow, I got through a whole session, my first year as an MLA without having to debate culture wars in Saskatchewan.

And we'd seen these culture wars burn across the United States. Republican politicians waving flames of division, you know, to hold onto power. We'd seen New Brunswick do it. We saw Heather Stefanson, the Premier of Manitoba, promise that if she got elected she would be bringing in pronoun legislation. I was like, it's coming. I jinxed it. I said we won't be dealing with culture war. We did a whole session, all we . . . The session focused on, you know, sovereignty and Saskatchewan-first but it wasn't a culture war, Mr. Speaker.

So then on August 22nd, you know, after a loss of some votes in the stronghold of the Saskatchewan Party government, we saw a government just absolutely lose it and so shocked that this could happen. They still won the seat, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, we just didn't have ballot boxes full of ballots, you know. Sask Party, yes, yes. So on August . . . So up to these points . . . And I don't really want to get into some of the finer details we'll call the Lumsden incident, Mr. Speaker.

On August 22nd, following that, the Ministry of Education announces a new policy. You know, and I'm thinking here, okay, they're going to say no more third-party sex ed providers. That's what we're going to be facing.

[12:15]

You know, we all know those are — I said I wouldn't even get into it and here I am — those are organizations doing great work and absolutely an unfortunate incident that never should happen in our schools. I get that. You know, I volunteered with OutSaskatoon for a lot of the time leading up to my education degree, when you want to get into the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan, you need to do volunteer hours with youth.

I said, you know what? This is an organization that I can get behind. I don't know everything that there is to know about the 2SLGBTQ+IA rainbow umbrella. You know, I come to this with a certain world view. I come with my own experiences. I identify as a male; I always have. That's never really been something that I've been challenged with. So I thought, you know what? I want to go and I want to learn. I want to support folks that are different than me, and I want to ensure that they have a world, an upbringing that I didn't have. You know, I want youth today to be able to understand who they are in safe environments.

So I know, I've seen the work first-hand that organizations like OutSaskatoon provide. I know these are good people and I know, Mr. Speaker, that they would not put out information that isn't age appropriate. It's a really bad situation. There is humanity to

be had here. I think we can all come to the table and agree on that and say, mistake. This can't happen again. So we come to this situation, I get it. I may not agree 100 per cent, but I understand.

So on August 22nd, the Ministry of Education comes out, and they bring out new parental inclusion and consent policies. And I'm going to read out the policy. The policy is outlined as such. The first line is where the punch comes:

Schools must seek parent/guardian permission when changing the preferred name and pronouns used by students under the age of 16 in school;

Parents/guardians must be informed about the sexual health education curriculum and have the option to decline their children's participation;

Boards of education must immediately pause involvement with any third-party organization, such as ARC Foundation and SOGI 123 program

Which I should note, as far as I know — and I can be corrected — these organizations have not presented in schools in Saskatchewan. Continue:

Connected to sexual health education as the ministry undertakes review of educational resources to ensure alignment with curriculum outcomes. Only teachers, not outside third parties, will be able to present sexual education materials in the classroom. This directive does not include professionals employed by the government ministries or the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

Most notably as I mentioned ARC Foundation, SOGI 123 have never been run in Saskatchewan schools where third-party sex ed has been run by organizations like OutSaskatoon and Planned Parenthood.

So the government decides. They put out this legislation. The first line, that's really where the hook and sinker and kind of the punch comes from, where you really feel like okay, not only are we seeing, you know, evidence-based education being removed from our schools, now we're seeing that we're going that one step forward and we're going to seek parental guardian permission when changing preferred name and pronouns used by students.

And, Mr. Speaker, the feedback was swift. You know, this was out. It came out. We all read it. It's a short one so we were able to respond quickly. Numerous organizations sound the alarm right away. I'd like to read some of the quotes from the Saskatchewan Children's Advocate. I know this has been canvassed quite thoroughly by my colleague, but I think these quotes are important:

"We agree with the government's desire to place a high importance on the involvement of parents and guardians in education. However this objective can be achieved without imposing such strict rules around consent, which could result in a violation of a young person's rights under the provincial, constitutional, and international human rights laws," said advocate Lisa Broda who conducted the review.

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code states that "discrimination because of gender identity or gender expression is against the law in Saskatchewan."

And I have reminded this House before that it was this House in 2014 that brought those forward.

More quotes from the child advocate and her report, "One of these reasons could be that the young person knows their identity would not be supported at home."

Mr. Speaker, the reason I think that so many of us had such a visceral reaction to that first point — and I'm going to say us as, you know, our community — is that we know how difficult it is to come out. You know, like, we understand this. We've all had to go through it ourselves. You start lining up the people in your life who you think might be a safe person to talk to, you know, as you're kind of like, oh. You know, I grew up in an evangelical Christian church where my church separated from an organization that they were a part of because of gay marriage. They wanted to have nothing to do with it. I knew from the youngest age that this wasn't something that my church community was going to want to talk about or accept me for.

This is a difficult path for anybody. And no matter who or where you are on that path, you should be able to choose when it is right for you to talk to someone, to let them in. And like I said, you're lining up those people in your life who you think are safe folks. And it's a journey.

And as you progress, you know, you start to learn about your community. You start to see . . . You know, I was very fortunate. You know, it wasn't easy but, you know, we made it work. I forged relationships. I knew the people I'd wanted to, you know . . . You know you want to keep people in your life. But you know, as I have . . . You know, I volunteered with the queer community. You know there are families out there that would rather kick their child out of their home than accept them. You know it's a reality, and everyone worries about it.

So Lisa Broda continues:

"The young person who should not be deprived of their right for the expression of their gender identity to be respected during this time. Transgender and gender-diverse youths, however, are at even higher risk than the general population, being over seven times more likely to commit suicide than their peers who identify with their assigned gender," reads the report.

The advocate's report goes on to say that, "the Prairie provinces had the highest rate of youth in Canada who change schools or started home schooling due to lack of support for their gender," and reads, "there are not sufficient professional supports available in schools to meet this additional demand."

Plain and simple. So who are we supposed to believe on this? There are not sufficient professional supports available in schools to meet the additional demand. And, Mr. Speaker, I will speak to ample supports later, but who are we supposed to believe?

In two cases, the government has refuted their own officials. First

when the courts . . . When the Ministry of Education, the assistant deputy minister went to the court case and said, this is how long it took my ministry to develop this, eight days. We got 18 emails, 7 of which were identified as from parents.

We had the Premier go to the media and say, that's not true. The Premier refuted it. Whatever you just heard in court, that's not how it goes down. His own people he threw under the bus. I hate to be the person who had to feel that bus run over them after sitting in court defending their government's policies.

The second government official that this government has refuted, who they've hired to do a job in Saskatchewan, is the Saskatchewan Children's Advocate. The Saskatchewan Children's Advocate is saying, hey alarm bells. There are not enough professional supports in schools to meet the additional demand.

And yet you have the Minister of Education standing in this Chamber and saying there are ample supports. There are so many supports; don't worry about it. Those queer and gender-diverse kids will get the psychologists appointments. We'll get them into counsellors. We'll work through it, and then we'll make sure that their parents know.

It just doesn't make any sense. Two scathing rebukes of the people who work for the government. People who you've hired, who you instill trust in to do their jobs, we have refuted them publicly.

Mr. Speaker, these are scathing rebukes from the government's Children's Advocate. You know, and it really begs the question, what's the point? If we are going to hire these people to do a job and to review things and to bring forward recommendations, what's the point if we're just going to say nope.

Actually we've been having a lot of conversation amongst ourselves, writing policy on napkins at — what's that place where they go for drinks? Memories. We've actually developed the pronoun policy at Memories on a napkin. We didn't tell you, assistant deputy minister of Education that this was actually been brewing over in the Premier's office or in Executive Council for, you know, months, days, years. Tens of thousands of parents who've come forward, we forgot to tell you about that. Because we're just going to do it anyhow.

We're going to circumvent our assistant deputy ministers. We're going to circumvent the child's advocate for our own agenda. We see them circumvent privacy laws. We see them circumvent the Privacy Commissioner. We see them circumvent the child's advocate. Completely sidestepping the rules that they've set up for themselves, breaking their own rules, breaking their own human rights code that they brought in. Nope, that doesn't apply to us anymore — backtrack. It's just shocking. I'm going to read what some other organizations have said about this as well.

The other organization I'd like to speak to is the STF, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. It says:

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation has been vocal about concerns with the increasing demands on teachers related to increasing class size and complexity. These circumstances raise questions as to whether teachers will be

able to offer this support.

Basically saying you're working us off your feet. We have thousands of extra students. We haven't caught up to the demands of hiring those educators. And now you're going to say to us that when a vulnerable student comes to us, confiding in us that they might not have a safe home life or maybe they're just wanting to tell someone safe in their life, add that on the plate. Throw that on the 35-plus kid classroom.

I guess when you have 35 kids, you know, there must be a list you try to maintain, and you throw that on there. And you're like okay, well now if I'm going to validate this person, now I'm going to go and have to fill out more paperwork. I'm going to throw that on my day at the end of the day before I'm trying to get home to eat dinner with my family, etc., etc.

I'm going to read the news release from the STF:

News release: Dangerous Saskatchewan government policy harmful to students

Without meaningful consultation from experts in the education sector [which we know is true], the government has introduced a policy driven by political ideology which will harm 2SLGBTQIA+ students. Similar policies in other provinces have been analyzed by children's advocates and deemed unconstitutional. This policy raises questions of human rights and is in opposition to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation is calling this new Ministry of Education policy a massive overreach and an attempt by the government to react to recent by-election losses. [Cutting right to the chase.]

[12:30]

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; Saskatchewan School Boards Association; League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents; Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials; and even representatives from the Ministry of Education have been working together with an organization called ARC Foundation to plan a pilot program for some of Saskatchewan's schools utilizing their resources in a program called sexual and orientation gender 123. This program supports the inclusion of all people and focuses on resources for supporting sexual orientation and gender identity. With the stroke of a pen, the minister has unilaterally cancelled this program.

“This is a political response to a government losing support in a by-election to a far right party following an isolated incident,” said Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation president, Samantha Becotte. “Once again, as with government's recent advertising campaign on teachers' salaries, we are seeing education issues being tossed around like political footballs.”

In a letter to the Minister of Education dated August 15, the STF cautioned the minister on making knee-jerk, political reactions to a one-time event that might affect approved

resources, and that politicizing the classroom is a dangerous path to take. Today's announcement further indicates that the Saskatchewan Party is using education as a political weapon.

Research from organizations like Egale Canada is clear. When students do not feel safe and supported in schools, they face higher instances ranging from anxiety to depression to self-harm, suicidality, addiction, and homelessness. This is in addition to bullying, shame, and discrimination they may experience while in school.

"Parents and guardians must always play a role in the educational lives of children. However to suggest this is the motivation for these announcements stretches the minister's credibility considerably," said Becotte. "Government states that they believe in safe and caring classrooms and yet students safety and quality of education are being sacrificed to meet the government's political needs."

That's a statement that cuts through it all pretty, pretty quickly. "The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation policy, written and approved by teachers, is explicit about gender expression . . ." Sorry, I'm going to continue with the statement from the STF:

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation policy, written and approved by teachers, is explicit about gender expression and sexual orientation being inherent human rights within both policy and legislation. STF policy also promotes safe schools free of discrimination, hate speech, physical abuse, and other types of bullying based on actual, perceived assumption around sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The federation is calling on the government to reverse this policy decision and engage in meaningful consultation with its sector partners and expert teachers.

End statement by the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation.

Again as I've canvassed earlier, just more total disregard of stakeholder professionals who work in this field every single day, who I'm sure — and I will say this — probably know more about these situations than most of us in this room sans my colleague, the critic for Education, who does amazing work understanding the needs of that file.

So what we see then following this, we've got statements come out. Experts disagree. This is going to harm kids. Warning, alarm bells, pause. Let's get back to the table. Not something that they're interested in doing.

The first time the policy is then taken to court. So we have a non-profit, UR Pride, and their legal counsel claiming that the policy violates Charter rights to the security of the person under section 7 and non-discrimination based on identity under section 15. We all wait on bated breath as this policy moves forward.

On September 28th, Justice Megaw granted the injunction request of UR Pride, citing that the policy would cause irreparable harm to children. Pausing this policy, he . . . Sorry, he recommends pausing this policy while this goes through the courts, a completely reasonable response.

My colleague, the member from Saskatoon Eastview, has thoroughly canvassed the decision by Justice Megaw. And he was so kind to bring copies for every single member of the legislature so that they had, you know, had their homework to take home.

But I'm going to read a little bit of an analysis from the *StarPhoenix* written by Brandon Harder because I think it really gives some good different perspective on the situation.

The title of this is, "Written decision on pronoun injunction offers a look at judge's perspective:"

On Thursday a Regina judge issued a decision granting an injunction, temporarily halting the implementation or enforcement of the Saskatchewan government's policy requiring parental consent for students under 16 to use a preferred name or pronoun.

But beyond his bottom line on the injunction, the 56-page decision [which has been canvassed thoroughly] offers insight into his perspective on a number of aspects of the case as it stood when he rendered his reading. [This is titled] expert evidence.

Justice Michael Megaw had to determine whether, in the absence of an injunction, affected students would suffer the risk of irreparable harm. In doing so he turned to what he referred to as expert opinions. UR Pride, the non-profit organization that launched the case against the policy seeking to have it halted and further struck down as unconstitutional, filed expert opinion affidavits supporting its position.

So I'm just going to pause here and note that the judiciary branch of our government system has so far done more stakeholder engagement than the Ministry of Education has. Okay.

The judge references passages from these that prescribe negative effects on 2SLGBTQ+ youth who experience identity invalidation. One expert cited research stating gender-diverse youth feel less support from their parents and have a higher likelihood of either running away from home or being kicked out. They face troubling levels of family violence, and the data contradict "the assumption that all parents are safe and must give consent for gender-diverse young people to have their identities supported at school," that expert submitted.

The judge also referred to an expert opinion filed by the government in support of its position. That expert wrote of an importance of careful, professional assessment prior to a youth adopting a new name and pronoun, the role a parent plays in facilitating such assessment, the potential psychological effects of such a transition, and the potential difficulty in reversing such a decision. However the judge drew attention to UR Pride's lawyers pointing out the government expert mentions nothing about the rather potentially severe mental health and physical abuse such youth might suffer at home in an unsupportive home.

I'm going to pause there for just a second. Two very expert opinions, and I think that the expert opinion that weighed in the

case from the government's side has very due credit. I am sure they did their research. The Minister of Justice presented that argument yesterday. But again, it has no mention of the potential for harm.

I'm going to continue:

These kind of effects on youth in unsupportive homes are "the very issue presented by UR Pride," the judge wrote. On the evidence presented, he found that those affected by the policy will suffer irreparable harm.

The next section is called "costs." Megaw wrote, and this is a really . . . Sorry, I'm going to preface this. This is a really interesting one, and I have a really interesting article that I will talk about afterward here. Megaw wrote:

In its oral argument, the government sought an order for UR Pride to reimburse the province for legal expenses associated with addressing this phase of the case, something it made no mention of in written arguments.

I'm just going to pause right there.

The government has put forward a policy. It is being challenged. And now it's asking that a non-profit organization that's housed at the University of Regina pay those legal bills.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw attention to the fact that the Saskatchewan Party government just hired private lawyers to work on this pronoun case from a company that suspiciously has donated \$9,960 to the Saskatchewan Party. From what I'm told, it's already cost \$10,000. So not only are we asking in a court case that, hey non-profit, you guys need to pay up. But you know what, we're not doing so hot in court and my government lawyers over here just aren't doing it. So let's hire private ones to come in and do that work. Oh, and by the way, they are actually donors of our party so it's a really good relationship.

Just something to highlight. I won't get too deep into this, because I'm not a lawyer. I will rest with folks who know more. I just thought it was a really interesting little tidbit. Just a lot of money going back and forth — and a request for a non-profit to pay legal bills.

Let me continue:

"In reply, the court indicated to counsel for UR Pride that he ought not spend much time on this issue in his further submissions," the judge wrote.

For the government to "throw this issue in" when it did wouldn't allow UR Pride to properly consider the issue and respond, he decided. But he went on to say, given he'd ruled in favour of UR Pride in the injunction application, he wouldn't have awarded the government costs "in any event."

"The issue of costs may be argued at the substantive hearing," he wrote, presumably referring to an upcoming court date where arguments will be made on the constitutional questions raised by the case.

Was the application for an injunction premature?

According to Megaw, the government stated that individual school divisions had not yet developed their own administrative procedures on how to implement the policy, and argued that without such procedures, "there are no harms occurring, and accordingly there is nothing to enjoin through an interlocutory injunction."

The judge rejected that notion as well, writing that the policy had been implemented by the Regina school division since the beginning of the year, as evidenced by the affidavit of the Regina teacher. The government offered no evidence to suggest otherwise, with regard to Regina or elsewhere, the judge noted.

The policy was being followed and students were being affected, he surmised, based on the evidence at his disposal.

Further, he wrote the government indicated implementation of the policy would not be paused, pending the outcome of the case.

No, the injunction application was not premature, Megaw decided.

Public interest standing

The Supreme Court of Canada has explained public interest standing as a legal mechanism that "allows individuals or organizations to bring cases of public interest before the courts even though they are not directly involved in the matter and even though their own rights are not infringed."

Megaw wrote that the government argued UR Pride should not be granted such standing, as it does not have "a real stake in the proceedings," isn't "sufficiently linked to the claim" being advanced, and further that it wouldn't be able to "muster the evidence that it required to fairly and accurately decide the case."

The judge rejected these arguments, deciding UR Pride not only has a demonstrated link to, and a genuine interest in, gender diversity, but that it has also the ability, resources, and presence of expertise required to advance its claim.

As such, he granted UR Pride public interest standing so . . . [he could advance the case].

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to make one comment on that. This is an organization. Organizations like UR Pride, OutSaskatoon, Planned Parenthood — these are non-profit organizations that are doing work in this province that is being not done by the government.

So it's really interesting to me that the government argued that UR Pride had no stake in this, when they are really one of the only organizations in Regina doing this work for this community. And likewise in Saskatoon, there are no government organizations doing this work.

I spoke to these organizations after I was elected. And they told me about, you know, during the pandemic, it was community-

based organizations that were housing and feeding people. You know, they were the last line of defence for so many folks. So many of these organizations went above and beyond the scope of what they were trying to do.

In the case of OutSaskatoon, you know, they were out there trying to feed and house people and ensure that people were safe. How can you shelter in place when you don't have a home during a national, a global pandemic? You know, to say that they don't have a stake in this is something.

[12:45]

I'm going to continue on my timeline of events here. The same day . . . And we've talked about this a bit. Justice Megaw's opinion is 56 pages. It was canvassed by my colleague from Saskatoon Eastview very thoroughly. It's a long document. And we've said okay, well lawyers read really fast. But it was like . . . I think that there was like one breath of air from so many members in our communities when that injunction came into place. It was like okay, we can sit down for like one second. Because let's be serious, when you're a member of a minority community, you're kind of always making sure your rights are being understood. So we sat down and we said okay. Think there were some tweets that went out. We did a little, like, high-fives.

It was like 5 to 10 minutes later, stung by the court defeat, as if it had been prepared all along, the Premier announced that he would move forward with this policy as legislation anyway, claiming judicial overreach, and would pre-emptively use the rarely used outside of Quebec notwithstanding clause — and I should also say rarely used outside of conservative governments notwithstanding clause. And he would recall the legislature immediately for an emergency session to deal with the issue.

That brings us to . . . What have we got here for dates? I feel like I've been here for so long that I can't even remember what day it is. It's the 18th. On the 16th perhaps the strongest rebuke to this government yet, one of our human rights commissioners in Saskatchewan, Heather Kuttai, wrote this letter to the Premier resigning her position:

The Honourable Scott Moe
Premier and President of the Executive Council

Dear Premier Moe:

Please accept my letter of resignation as a commissioner with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission effective immediately.

This decision does not come lightly. When I was appointed in 2014, I was enthusiastic about championing the ways in which Canadians can be great citizens and because I believed that the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission was an organization that upheld individual rights, demanded people uphold the rights of others, and enabled equity and equality.

I was honoured to be a commissioner. I wholeheartedly contributed my time, my knowledge, and my understanding of what it means to be a Canadian citizen for the last nine years in this role. But I can no longer continue. I strongly

disagree with the proposed legislation that requires teachers to seek parental permission to change a child's name and/or pronoun when they are at school. This is an attack on the rights of trans and nonbinary and gender-diverse children which, contrary to what is being reported, is actually a very small number of kids.

A child's rights must always take precedence over a parent's obligations and responsibilities. Removing a child's rights in the name of parental rights is fundamentally anti-trans and harmful. This is something I cannot be a part of, and I will not be associated with a provincial government that takes away the rights of children, especially vulnerable children.

Research tells us they are truly vulnerable. I'm sure you know that 2SLGBT+ youth face many more risks of abuse and violence as well as mental health concerns from anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicide. It is a mistake to put teachers in the position of outing a child before they are ready.

The Canadian Centre for Suicide Prevention lists several factors that these young people experience as contributors to these mental health issues — bullying, violence, rejection, isolation, and withdrawal of parental and familial love and support. I can't understand why you and your government would want to be responsible for a system that brings harm to children. Requiring teachers to not use a child's chosen name or pronoun turns a teacher into a bully that causes psychological harm and schools into unsafe space.

My own son is trans. His coming-out process was psychologically and physically harmful. He was terrified to tell us. This was even though he felt relatively confident that he and his parents would still love him. He faced many mental health challenges. And one of the reasons he is now out, thriving, is because of the support he received at school. I hate to think what would have happened to him if he had not had that support.

The suggestion that children will receive all the counselling and guidance they need in school is not realistic. Already there are no extra resources for 2SLGBT+ youth. There are also not enough resources for kids with learning and reading disabilities or those who require testing and counselling. There are not enough educational assistants. Class sizes are too big. And there are fewer and fewer supports for our province's teachers. Trans, nonbinary, and gender-diverse kids do not have a prayer of getting all the help they need and deserve.

Speaking of prayers, in 2009 I was given the honour of giving the keynote address at the annual Lieutenant Governor's prayer breakfast where I spoke about the importance of inclusion, diversity, and the strength and resilience of the Saskatchewan people.

That speech resulted in me, a wheelchair user, working with then premier Brad Wall and a carpenter from the legislature to create a wheelchair-accessible podium. This podium was available for use and for loan to people with mobility

disabilities when they gave speeches. The podium was not just a tool, it was a symbol of equal opportunity.

And after helping create it, I started seeing all kinds of other ways I could help build a better Saskatchewan. I leaned into giving my time to the people of this great province. I now work as a volunteer board member for several community-based organizations because I believe in the power of inclusion and diversity and the need to build strong and effective communities where we take care of each other.

If this proposed legislation is enacted using the notwithstanding clause, Saskatchewan will no longer be a place that takes care of all its kids. This will be the only province in Canada where the rights of 2SLGBTQ+ children are not the same as other children in this or any other province. The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, like all other human rights commissions, was and is part of the world's response to the Holocaust. Equal and inalienable rights are supposed to be just that.

I cannot tell you the depth of my disappointment in the government I have worked for and supported for the last nine years, but I promise you that my efforts as a community builder and activist will only become stronger because of this enormous letdown.

Heather Kuttai,
Saskatoon

Ms. Kuttai also sent me a testimonial when I made a call-out for community members and allies to speak out about this, and I'm going to read that as well.

I could give testimony from different positions. I could take the perspective of human rights, as I am a commissioner of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission; or as a member of OutSaskatoon, a place I have supported through participating in the annual Saskatoon AIDS Walk. I could come as a testimony from other angles too. I am involved as a board member and a volunteer to at least six different community organizations. But today, instead, I give testimony as a mother.

My youngest son is trans. You would think that given our family involvement in social justice that he would've had an easy time coming out to us. I'm here to tell you, nothing could be further from the truth. It was painful and complicated, and even though we knew he knew we loved him, he was still terrified.

Little did we know that there would be so many barriers in front of us, from finding a gender-affirming doctor, to adjusting to new names and pronouns, to dealing with the fallout of such enormous transition, not least of which was our son's vulnerable, undiagnosed mental health.

For more than two years, our everyday was a life-and-death situation as we navigated an impossible, difficult adolescent mental health system. One particular night our son told us he needed to go to the emergency room, so intense were his suicidal thoughts. Leaving him overnight in the care of others was the longest of my life, but we got through it.

One of the strongest supports came from a few teachers at our neighbourhood high school who accepted his name and pronoun change. This didn't just help our son adjust; it helped me adjust too. Those teachers helped save his life, and as a parent who would do anything for her child, I owe them mine.

Our government wants the people of Saskatchewan to think this policy change is about good parenting and putting family first. I can tell you without reservation that that is not true. We all want to have involvement in our children's lives, and we want to believe that all homes are safe and nurturing. The truth is, even in the best of circumstances, sometimes the safest place to be yourself is at school.

I stand with my trans son and the teachers who have supported him.

Heather Kuttai

Ms. Kuttai, thank you so much for your service to our province. Thank you so much for your bravery in standing up for the most vulnerable in our province. Thank you for your bravery in standing up to a government that is just so willing to cause irreparable harm to children. We will carry your torch of respecting human rights in this province.

I had one more article that I really . . . I won't go through the whole thing. Maybe later. Let me just find it here. I really liked the quote.

This was from an article written by Jeremy Simes for the Canadian Press. The title is "'Harmful': Human rights commissioner resigns over Saskatchewan pronouns bill."

Just a few quotes:

Former Saskatchewan Human Rights Commissioner Heather Kuttai says she spoke with her son before she decided to resign on Monday over the province's proposed pronoun legislation.

Her son, who's transgender, told her to not go quietly. "That was kind of my light, I think," Kuttai told the Canadian Press. "We hear all those stories, but this one when it came to light really stung. It felt personal, for one thing."

Many of the quotes in this article do come from her letter:

This is the only province in Canada where the rights of 2SLGBTQ+ kids are not the same as other children in this country. We're all born into this country with rights. That's part of what makes this country great. We do not own our kids.

Just wanted to highlight that. I really liked the statement that her son said, "Do not go quietly." So that's why I'm raising these words in the legislature today. Very interesting as well.

I mean like I said, the articles have been coming fast and furious. I feel like we could stand here and just go through media and news articles and you could basically walk through this whole situation. This one, "Moe thanks Commissioner Kuttai, says

resignation is ‘perplexing.’” I thought that was really interesting. And you know what? I have the time. Maybe I’ll read it. Yeah, okay.

So the title and then there’s the bottom, the kind of byline there:

Carla Beck read part of Heather Kuttai’s letter to the Legislative Assembly, touching on her statement on Bill 137. “It’s something I cannot be part of and will not be associated with a provincial government that takes away the rights of children.”

Oh, I printed a bad copy. It’s a good one, though. Check it out. Look it up. Great article. Behind a paywall for me, but we’ll make sure that we file an appropriate article with the desk maybe later.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank Ms. Kuttai again. I just think those are powerful words. And I think it really, really begs the question of why we’re moving so fast through this process. I think that any member on this side of the House would say, let’s wait for this to go through the courts. Let’s pause it. That’s all we’ve asked. Let’s just pause it while we review, because there are ways that we can work together to ensure that parents aren’t kept in the dark, Mr. Speaker.

[13:00]

So this brings us back to here and now, basically today, the 18th. And I want to talk a little bit about, you know, some of the reasons why, why we’ve recalled the legislature. Of all the reasons — you know, we’ve looked at all this — of all the reasons to recall, this government has decided to call back an emergency session to ram through this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I really feel that it is, it’s a shameful ploy by any government to play to the fears of the unknown to gather support. In this case we’ve chosen a policy, a legislation, an emergency debate that will remove the rights of children. It’s an attack on the most vulnerable, 1 per cent of our population. And I really do believe this is a calculated political move.

And I know I’ve heard from experts. This is very important. People’s lives, their mental health, their physical safety, the children’s physical safety is at risk if just the wrong situation comes down the pipe and that pronoun consent letter hits the wrong house. And I know I’ll mention this again, but you know, when you look at homelessness statistics, 40 per cent of homeless youth in Canada identify as 2SLGBTQ+ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning, and two-spirit, plus]. It’s a fact. It’s something I do not take any pleasure standing up here in this House and saying, that these are vulnerable children. And this policy will hurt someone.

Shame, Mr. Speaker. Shame on a government that is so willing to jump into an ideology of fear and hate and division, for bringing culture war to Saskatchewan. You know, I really, really do believe that this is no longer the Brad Wall Sask Party of yore. And my colleague from Saskatoon Fairview mentioned it. We hear it on the doorstep all the time. I heard it in Meewasin. Voters who had voted Sask Party their entire life were going to vote for me because they just felt like whatever essence that Premier Wall — Mr. Speaker, am I allowed to say Premier Wall? — okay, the

former member from Swift Current, the former premier.

I think he did have an essence. I mean he oversaw bringing in the rights and freedoms. There was something that he brought to Saskatchewan. And as much as I’m, you know, I’m not on that side, you know, I will always debate. But people felt connected. And I think that he had a way of doing that — a softer, more compassionate conservatism. One can only ever ask, as someone on my side of the aisle, someone can only ask for softer, compassionate conservatism, you know, fiscal responsibility, smaller government ensuring that people can, you know, not see their rights attacked.

But really, it’s just something we’re hearing. And I really do see . . . Like, I really challenge members to reject this because what we’re seeing is just the rejection of moderate voices within this government. You know, let this be a conscience vote, like, so that people who have queer people in their life cannot be forced to be whipped to vote against them, right.

Let’s let people who might be opposed speak out, because I really do . . . And this is, I mean, Mr. Speaker, my electoral chances hinge on the fact that this party continues to go farther right, farther right, farther right and continues to reject moderate voices. And this warning will fall on deaf ears. And again we’ve talked about we don’t usually give advice and you probably don’t want to hear it from us, but the rejection of moderate voices is good for no one. It’s certainly something we’re seeing in the Saskatchewan Party.

Instead we’re seeing a fear, in the fear of a rightward split, we’re taking policy from the leader of the Saskatchewan United Party, the member from Saskatchewan Rivers. And your deputy tweeted today, “This is their policy book.” One has to ask, I mean, who’s leading here? Are there, I mean . . . Like, those policy books. It’s an interesting thought. I say, you know, it just seems like this is a government so worried about far right split that they’re willing to jump into division.

So, Mr. Speaker, that brings me to a point. You know, we have called for emergency debates in the legislature. We’ve called for it to be recalled. I have a number here. “NDP calls for emergency debate on planned changes to public health measures.” You know, we said . . . And while there were, you know, concessions made on both sides, you know, we said hey, if you’re going to loosen public health measures, let’s bring the legislature back and let’s talk about it. I distinctly remember, and I know I’m not one person who wants to continue to think back to COVID. You know, I think all of us have wanted to put it behind. But at the time, we had a huge death toll in Saskatchewan and we called for the legislature to be recalled.

We also called for the legislature to be called before schools reopened at that point. You know, we wanted to see what the plan was. We wanted to see what funds were being allocated, how were students going to feel safe. We wanted to propose things. How do we upgrade ventilation in our schools? Mr. Speaker, that request fell on deaf ears.

So I have to say, you know, we have called on these things, and you know, on other issues. Was the legislature recalled to address the skyrocketing costs of living? No. Was the legislature recalled and the notwithstanding clause used for classrooms bursting at

the seams who have seen funding decline year over year? No. The Saskatchewan Party government have continued to starve classrooms of funding and spent your tax dollars villainizing teachers with slanderous billboards.

Was the legislature recalled when the pandemic was at its height, when requests for leadership was made, when requests for input were made? No. Was the legislature recalled and the notwithstanding clause used when allegations of horrific abuse at certain private Christian schools came to light? No. A wait-and-see approach was taken by this government, starkly different to the not-so-wait-and-see approach that we've seen with these policies. Instead of a wait-and-see approach that we see on qualified independent schools, we see a legislature recalled for an emergency debate on the passage of legislation called the parental bill of rights.

We've essentially been recalled so the Premier can force through a policy that has been paused by the courts, that will cause irreparable harm, that has seen no consultation. No consultation. Again, a policy that was developed in eight days from 18 letters, of which seven identified as parents. No indication, as well, that any of these letters were from Saskatchewan families. They've also admitted that not a single example can be pointed to of the problem. Not the Premier, not the Minister of Health can point to a single parent surprised to hear their child is using a different pronoun.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the government says that we need an emergency debate to enshrine parental involvement in our education system. But it's so clear — as I have outlined so far — through the lack of engagement and consultation, the Premier has ignored parents and is failing our students. While our schools continue to fall apart with holes in the roof, this government continues to ignore, distract, and continues to roll back the human rights of children.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that these are not the priority of parents in Saskatchewan. They are simply the priority of a Premier trying to keep a fractious, conservative coalition from going bonkers.

But let's be clear. We are happy to get back to work. That's our job. The member from Saskatoon Fairview said, you know, even if this is coming in right at the end of our Thanksgiving dinner, we made it work. I took a trip, visited my mother-in-law in Grande Prairie, just saw how cheap gas prices were in Alberta, 15 cents less. Coming through Lloydminster back to Saskatoon, I felt . . . It's like, let's fill up and conserve before we get back to 15-cents-plus a litre in Saskatoon.

But we all came back here. We all changed our plans because this is our job. We know that this is important.

What we would be rather discussing in an emergency session and what my colleagues proposed we discuss in an emergency session? We proposed three options when we reconvened, three emergency debates.

One on the cost-of-living crisis. You talk to people on the doorsteps. It's what's everyone is concerned about, the cost of groceries. I've canvassed gas taxes in this Chamber. PST [provincial sales tax] on absolutely everything. My colleague has

canvassed that the PST is one of the most regressive taxes you can apply that hits the lowest income earning Saskatchewan folks the hardest — plain and simple.

It's not hard to understand that when you are on SIS [Saskatchewan income support] and SAID or making the lowest minimum wage in the country — because it went up just recently and it's still the lowest. Better check in on that — the lowest minimum wage in the country. All that PST that you're paying on all those goods hits you the hardest than someone like any one of us in this Chamber who — our wages are public record; people know what we make — we can absorb PST much easier than anyone else can, especially lowest income. Especially folks on fixed incomes, and living on minimum wage.

Mr. Speaker, if we are debating cost of living, I would love to debate the skyrocketing rates of food bank use by parents and children in Saskatchewan. There is an example of parental involvement in the lives of their children. Saskatchewan has the highest rates of child poverty in the country. There are more people using the food bank in Saskatchewan than any other province in Saskatchewan. That is an emergency, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is an emergency worth an emergency debate, not determining the human rights of 1 per cent of the population.

This legislative body should be ashamed that we are standing in this Chamber debating the human rights, the rolling back of human rights of 1 per cent of the population while children and parents are using the food bank in Saskatchewan more than ever before. And it's not just . . . Again I represent a riding in Saskatoon. This is happening everywhere in Saskatchewan. This is affecting parents and children in every single riding in this province. This is what we should be talking about, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We proposed an emergency debate on health care. That was the number two when we showed up a day after Thanksgiving. We wanted to debate the fact that absolutely no one can find a family doctor in this province. It is everyone I talk to. You are golden if you have had a family doctor. You are so lucky. You are among an echelon that you've actually found it and retained it. No one else can find it.

And I have spoken about this. Well maybe I have heckled it a couple times while my colleague from Saskatoon Fairview had been grilling the former Health minister about access to family doctors, that you used to be able to go onto an app or a web page that would say where family doctors are taking patients. And I was on the doorstep with — this was, I distinctly remember it was like a line in the sand, because I was door knocking up in Lawson . . . no, sorry, River Heights. I only got Lawson Heights just recently. And a gentleman who lived in a kind of . . . It's not a seniors' home; it was like a veterans' or like retired teachers' condo development. We have a lot of those in the northern section of my riding . . . Yes, Mr. Speaker.

[13:15]

The Deputy Speaker: — You know, the member's wandering around quite a bit from Bill No. 137. If you'd stick a little bit more to the bill. You can wander around a bit, but you're getting a little carried away.

Mr. Teed: — Absolutely, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm just slowly canvassing through some of the like, the emergency debates. But I will come back to Bill No. 137. I'll just quickly get . . . I may just finish this little line of thought and I will jump back.

I just remembered this being a line in the sand where I helped a gentleman find a family doctor. We went on the website. The website was live and I found one. I said, go to this clinic. Call them right away. You come back to this Chamber and that website now is gone.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the case of emergency debates that we think that we should be having here in this Chamber, we wanted to talk about health care. ERs [emergency room] bursting at the seams, ambulances that can't keep up, a constituent of mine left on the floor while waiting for an ambulance, waiting lists for specialists. I spoke to a constituent this summer who was . . . Her child was waiting three years to see an allergist. The child will be in school with unknown allergies before they'll be able to see an allergist in Saskatchewan.

That comes back to Bill 137 because Bill 137, *The Education Act* respecting parental rights, claims that it will bring your relationship, as a parent, will bring it closer to your child. Mr. Speaker, I can't think of any more worry that a parent could have than seeing their child with unknown allergies not be able to see a specialist for three years and knowing that that child will go into kindergarten or grade 1 without even being able to determine what the allergy is.

How are you supposed to defend against that? How are you supposed to be involved? Are you supposed to go to school with your child to ensure that they're going to be okay? You have to place a trust in teachers, say hey, we don't even know what allergy my poor child has. This bill will not solve that problem.

And Mr. Speaker, we proposed an emergency debate on health care because waiting lists for surgeries in Saskatchewan are the worst in the country. And even with the government's private clinic plan, which is costing Saskatchewan people way more than a public plan, it's still backlogged.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I will stick closer to the bill, I had just an article that was released on the 15th, just this Sunday. And it is called, "Concerns are growing among staff at Sask hospitals as they reach their capacity." Hospitals are at capacity. I won't dive into this as I'm going to stay closer to Bill 137, but I think any parent in an emergency situation wants to know that that emergency room is available. And while it may not completely link to the rights of children in the classroom, I think those parents, in a parental bill of rights, should outline that as a parent of a child they should have access to the health care that they need.

Lastly, my colleague from Saskatoon Eastview proposed an emergency debate on the state of our education system. Bill 137, *An Act to amend The Education Act, 1995 respecting parental rights*. We think that if we are calling this legislature back, that we should be debating the issues that are in our education system. And I can canvass those issues, and I think they do pertain to this bill.

We propose this emergency debate on the state of our education

system because we are seeing the highest percentage of children going to school hungry than anywhere else in the country. And I've said and I earlier mentioned, will Bill 137 feed the children that are coming to school hungry, children who are going to schools in every single riding in this province?

Every single one of us MLAs has schools in our ridings. Every single one of us has constituents who cannot afford to feed their child. All of our ridings are different. All of our ridings have different complexities, but this is an issue that is hitting everyone. Bill 137 will not help that parent who can't afford to feed their child. We wanted to talk about cuts to per-student funding that have been happening year over year over year; student fees that are going through the roof, most recently the addition of lunchroom fees. Like what happens to the parents who can't afford the lunch room fees? Are there community groups that are paying for those? Are those parents organizing child care over lunch?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was really lucky growing up that, you know, if my parents weren't home, we either stayed at school — we lived a block away — or we went to a neighbour who, you know, would pick us up and feed us lunch. Like those kind of community bonds are really what built Saskatchewan. And I worry that with things like lunchroom fees we are straining those bonds. We are straining what makes Saskatchewan such an amazing place to live. We talk about it all the time. The Leader of the Opposition, our leader talks about it all the time, those Saskatchewan values that she saw growing up, that we all have experienced.

One teacher posted on Twitter, formerly known as X — no, other way around, X formerly known as Twitter — that this year they were seeing a student fee bill for \$750. And it was broken down. She posted it right on her tweet. It included the lunchroom fees, it included the sports fees, and it included some of the school fees. It was like two kids, 750 bucks. And I think any parent who wants to be involved in their child's life wants to see their child succeed and have access to all those things.

And I just think about even in my own life, you know . . . I'm going to use an example. My car desperately needs a new set of winter tires this winter. Even at Costco with my equity cheque and the cheapest tires maybe — maybe there's cheaper, I'll take suggestions — a bill for a thousand bucks. That's a big bill to slam on anyone, you know, in a month. Or you need to do repairs. \$750 for student fees, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's a huge bill to slap on someone at the start of the year.

In the most expensive . . . And you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I am a small-business owner. I see that a bit. In September things dip because the fees that parents are seeing associated with school, the start-up of the year, you know, they're huge. \$750, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that's a lot.

And I just question that in a bill designed to address parental involvement in their students' lives. But that's okay. That's fine. Let's just keep slapping taxes and fees on the families of Saskatchewan to stress them even more.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to also address closure of school labs in classrooms and music rooms to make up space for the higher enrolment. That's what we should be debating on this

floor in an emergency debate on education. Textbooks from the '80s. Textbooks that teach you that the Loch Ness monster exists. There are kids in chemistry classrooms that have no supplies or the labs have been turned into overflow classrooms. And this is happening in ridings across the country — sorry, the province. Every single riding is affected by these closures because the funding levels have been cut and cut and cut and cut.

Then you talk about cuts to teaching positions. And my colleague canvassed it earlier. The rate of student enrolment, nearly 3,500 I'm quoting, give or take. And it was like 9 per cent enrolment to 1 per cent teacher increase.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 137, the parental rights Act, does not hire more teachers in Saskatchewan to teach the children of Saskatchewan, plain and simple. It doesn't teach. It doesn't hire any more EAs. It doesn't give them any more hours. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 137 affects 1 per cent of the population.

This is the list. This is what we should be debating in this House. That's my opinion. It's the opinion of the official opposition. We proposed all three the day we came back from Thanksgiving. All three were voted down, voted down by a government that's so out of touch, so tired, and so out of ideas that they would rather roll back the human rights of trans and queer youth than address the real issues facing Saskatchewan people. I think that's disrespectful. I think the people of Saskatchewan deserve better than that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's just clear that this government does not want to debate their record on any of these topics.

Next we had some rule changes come forward, rule changes meant to rush through this process. And you know, I canvassed this at length when we debated the motion on rules. But you know, we really had to ask. If the Premier wanted to quash the rights of children, he could have done it in a regular sitting. Should the legislation, use of the notwithstanding clause require more scrutiny? Or at the very least due process of a regular parliamentary sitting? And the other day, that's what I questioned.

Why the rush on this legislation? Why an emergency sitting? What are they trying to hide from the public? And my colleague the member from Regina University canvassed this thoroughly, eloquently. What are they trying to hide from the media? Although the media have been, again, just fantastic at pumping out articles on these topics. Kudos to the fifth estate. I think that's what they're called. We'll look it up after. Thank you to the media for covering these stories. Mr. Speaker, the only secrets that are being kept from parents are by this government. They're the only ones keeping parents in the dark.

Not only have we been called back for an emergency session to debate an issue that absolutely no one asked for, and when you look at polling . . . Now sometimes we like polling; sometimes we don't. Four per cent of people put parental rights in their top three issues. Four per cent.

Not only have we been called back for an emergency sitting that will roll back the human rights of queer and trans kids that will affect 1 per cent of the population, we've also seen the rules of our provincial legislature altered, changed by the government majority who is using their majority, as I said, like a hammer to ram through this rule changes and this legislation. This is hugely

concerning to watchers of our democracy. Why? Because it's like a double-edged sword. If you can use your majority in a parliamentary democracy to change the rules of your Chamber, what stops them from doing that come October 25th when we sit here on a regular sitting schedule?

And if you can use the notwithstanding clause to roll back the human rights of trans and queer youth, roll back the human rights of children, what is stopping from rolling back other human rights? That is what the people of Saskatchewan are concerned about. Everyone should be watching this Chamber as we debate this.

And again I made a note here. Just huge kudos to my colleague from Regina Douglas Park for championing our democracy on Thursday and speaking to these rule changes. Like, kudos, because it's so important. The official opposition, we are 14 members. We're the largest official opposition that this Chamber has seen since 2011. And we're holding that up. Holding up our democracy. Defending against rule changes. Defending against the use of the notwithstanding clause to roll back the human rights of children.

[13:30]

And I just have to again, I have to ask, what is this government trying to hide from the people of Saskatchewan by ramming through this legislation, the use of the notwithstanding clause, out of a regular sitting, so fast in what will potentially be under like three or four days? What's the rush? What's the hurry? Why? Why are we doing this? The member from Regina University and I queried it a bit. Again, eloquent query: why are we doing this?

Was it to appease a rebellious crew of backbenchers, threatening to leave the Saskatchewan Party for the true-blue Sask United Party over here? Because it's the only thing I can think of. It's the only ultimatum from a hard-to-manage, large, long-in-the-tooth government caucus where the true-blue conservative values are actually sitting, and some kind of populist, conservative lite government that raises taxes on everyone sits over here. One has to wonder what the rush was, what has pushed this so far. Was 20 per cent in Lumsden-Morse really that push, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Again I implore members of this government to speak out. Again I implore a conscience vote. Let people vote with their conscience on this issue. Let them talk. Let them speak out about this. Because I know there are moderate voices. I know there are people with hearts beating on this side of the Chamber, people who have queer people in their lives, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I just can't fathom any other reason. Again we've talked about a distraction, a smokescreen away from a record. And again I will note, I don't want to take away the severity and the weight of this conversation because I have talked to members of my community who see that language as, you know, we're saying it's a distraction. But, Mr. Speaker, I can't see any other reason.

I know this is a serious issue, and that is why I'm here speaking this. But I cannot put my finger on any reason why the government would choose to bring back this legislature for an emergency debate on this topic other than to hold together a shaking tent, to hold together a fractious, conservative lite

coalition while a true-blue conservative party starts sniping at members.

Okay, I'll bring it back to Bill 137 for the member from Estevan. I promise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I canvassed that this legislation will be harmful. I've canvassed, you know, how we got here, the rule changes, and I just wanted to note a few more things. You know, you'd think that 40 hours seems like an admirable time frame but, you know, we're squishing it into as few days as humanly possible. We've talked about how a bill really usually runs through the session.

Now, I mean, the only thing that I can think of that's a benefit is that people are watching right now. I get messages all the time: Matt Love's doing — pardon me, Mr. Speaker. I apologize. The member from Saskatoon Eastview, you know, he's doing great. Fire. The member from Saskatoon Fairview: fire. The member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre: fire. Regina Douglas Park: fire. Cumberland: fire. Just getting those comments. People are watching this right now. And so maybe, if by squishing them into 40 hours we're getting people's eyes on this, you know, I think that's a benefit. I wish that the people would come and sit in these galleries and watch their official opposition debate for 33 hours on a bill.

Mr. Speaker, I have some notes here from, you know, even the Premier of Alberta has expressed hesitancy on wading into this debate. That when it had come up at their convention for the United Conservative Party, she spoke publicly saying well, we're not tied to those policies. Which is a safe way of saying, you know, well we're going to do a little bit of a temperature test. We're going to watch our twin Saskatchewan, see how it works out for them maybe before wading in. But maybe, maybe the queer and trans and LGBTQ people in the Premier of Alberta's life, maybe they've told her this will hurt people. I can only hope that they're appealing to the heartstrings of that government. But even the Premier of Alberta has expressed hesitancy.

I also have some notes here, wondering, you know . . . I have asked, why have we not heard more voices from the government side on this bill? I'd love to hear some government members stand up and tell me their opinion on queer and trans people and human rights of that group.

And I think about some of the urban members of the Saskatchewan Party. You know, we've been told that this issue was the . . . They heard about it on the doorstep in Lumsden-Morse. But you know, I really wonder about some of the . . . We've got one, maybe one urban MLA for the Saskatchewan Party here. You know, is this issue resonating in Saskatoon? I haven't heard it. I've heard people are furious about it on the doorstep.

You know, maybe they're not talking to me. Maybe that's the thing. Sometimes you don't say those things because . . . I would hope maybe someone would talk to me about it and I could explain my position and just maybe we could come to some understanding. I said this is one of those issues I just can't agree to disagree on, but it would be good to have that conversation.

I think about Saskatoon, the folks there. Oh, sorry, I missed the

member from Saskatoon Riversdale. We've got a couple urban MLAs here. We've got a couple from Regina. Are these issues coming up on the doorstep? They're certainly not coming up in Saskatoon Meewasin, I can tell you that. I can tell you that from this summer.

So again I would challenge any government members. I would challenge: vote with your conscience. Don't stand by. Don't sit on the wrong side of history on this. History will not be kind to this decision. This is 2023. This isn't 1950 anymore. We have to be thinking forward. We have to be thinking of better ways to involve parents in their children's lives. And I've canvassed quite a few options here today.

I'd go through a couple more notes that, you know, I really did canvass earlier, but some of these rule changes have really . . . You know, you see a stark effect of the rule changes of not being able to introduce people, because folks aren't showing up to their Legislative Assembly because we are unable to, even as an opposition, recognize them.

You know, I thought it was just galling that the Minister of Labour would not stand and introduce the president of SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union] when she was sitting in these galleries. That's the right thing to do. They were introduced by our critic for Labour. The high ground, even though you are cancelling introductions, that's the right thing to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have completely removed, for this emergency session, the ability to recognize people in this House. We've also removed petitions. And as I've mentioned — again I've talked about this before — one of the few ways, as members in this Chamber, of raising issues that are important to us is petitions.

Mr. Speaker, what we have is a government that's just completely burning bridges and relationships. A Human Rights Commissioner resigned. ADMs [assistant deputy minister] thrown under the bus. Wilful ignorance to Children's Advocate, again another body hired by this government. It's just a plain and simple attack on democracy, use of the notwithstanding clause, rolling back human rights.

I really, really do urge folks to continue to reach out, to continue to reach out to all members of this Chamber. I urge them to continue to show up at this building, at rallies across this province to show their distaste with this policy, with these policy decisions that this government is making. Show them at the ballot box. Because that's where it will hurt the most, and they saw it in Lumsden-Morse. And this is where we are.

You know, I've talked a lot about, with all the emergent situations that we're seeing in Saskatchewan, that this is what we've decided to talk about. We've talked about education, cost of living, health care. The government instead has chosen an emergent debate to roll back the human rights of children. They have decided to make one of the few safe spaces in a queer or trans person's life now not a safe space.

This is really the crux of it: queer and trans students should be allowed to thrive. Queer and trans people are allowed to be free of discrimination. They are free to exist, have joy in their lives. I've already talked about queer and trans joy.

I got a message from someone who said, I want us to be able to talk about queer and trans joy because all we ever get to talk about is the issues that are facing our communities. Sometimes you just want to celebrate. And I know as one minority community to another, sometimes you just want to celebrate who you are and have joy. And sometimes you don't want to have to always be the one to bring back to the struggles that you face. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have broad shoulders; I can handle this. But I just wanted to relay that request.

Schools should be a safe environment. And I'll come back to the idea that so many students, regardless if you are gender-diverse or not, there's so many students with diverse home lives. And school is that one unique opportunity where you are allowed to be who you are. It can be that safe place to go if you don't have a great home life. Maybe you're not getting along with your parents; heaven forbid abuse is present in your home. That's horrible. But school is that refuge for so many people, and it should continue to be like that.

And I really have to wonder, you know. I go into some of the thoughts I had put together. You know, we've talked about the issues that we should be talking about. Why did we recall the legislature? Well we should be talking about the underfunding in education. That is what parents want to see.

But we're not talking about health care. We're not talking about the crisis in education as it goes to funding and classroom sizes. And we're not talking about health care. We're not talking about the homelessness crisis. We're not talking about a housing crisis. We're not talking about food bank usage. No, this is a government that has lost the plot, who has become so long in the tooth and so tired and out of touch, unwilling to debate a record that they don't want anyone to see, and so they're going to attack queer and trans kids as a distraction.

[13:45]

But I think I can really point to a causality here. And I think it was really telling this summer. And the causality of this out of touch was when we saw a premier who kind of disappeared for a summer. You know, the Premier has the control to call the by-elections that we saw this summer. We were all sitting there. We all knew they were going to happen. Everybody in this Chamber probably were keeping an eye, because it meant what we were doing over the summertime was going to have to change.

And instead of calling those by-elections at an appropriate time, we waited and waited and waited till the absolute last minute to call them. And then guess who wasn't there? The Premier of Saskatchewan. You know, I really think had he been on the doorsteps in Lumsden-Morse, Regina Walsh Acres, or Coronation Park, he would have heard a very different story about concerns and needs than the one we're hearing right now.

Because you know, just recently the Premier canvassed, talked about on a news interview about how three individuals approached him at the grocery store to praise his government's approach on the Bill 137. But you know, again, I have to ask. Three. We got 18 letters, seven of which are parents, three people in a grocery store, tens of thousands of parents. But completely absent from a by-election process this summer, nowhere on the doors.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would invite the Premier at the next earliest opportunity to go door knocking, to talk to people on the doorstep. Get out into the communities, get out into those urban ridings, get out into rural Saskatchewan. Because I think you'd quickly find a growing sentiment: an absent premier when needed the most, just disconnected from the things that are really pertinent to Saskatchewan families.

And it's just also that disconnect from our vulnerable youth that's both alarming and telling. I really do believe had the Premier not been absent from those by-elections, he would have heard from families. He would have heard from youth on the doorstep. He would have heard from so many people about the issues that are facing them, issues that we hear about: the cost of living; the cost of my kids' education; the three-year waiting list for health care. That's what he would have heard. He wouldn't have heard about pronouns because we certainly didn't in that by-election.

And while I'm just talking about . . . Now my colleagues aren't here, but you know, hopefully they're listening to me. I would hope that, you know, you think that when you're an MLA, everyone's listening to you.

Speaking of engagement, I can't move forward without acknowledging the remarkable achievements of my two newest colleagues. You know, their sweeping victories this summer weren't by chance. They were on the doorsteps listening to the issues that Saskatchewan voters hold as their most important issues. And their results? They won. A testament to their commitment. A testament to listening to the issues that matter most for people. It was an honour to be on the doorstep with them this summer, listening to concerns.

You know, when you're on the doorstep, no matter if you're in your own riding or you're door knocking for another candidate or you're door knocking a non-incumbent, you're hearing the same, you're hearing very similar issues. And you're getting in front of people. Each and every one of us needs to continue to be in front of people, and door knocking is that one way to do it.

I know even when I'm home and I get that knock on the door and it's someone wanting to chat, you know, oh why are they knocking on my door? But you know, it's one of those ways that we can be in front of people. It's so important.

Because what I heard during those by-elections: how am I going to pay my bills this month? I've spent through the \$500 affordability cheque back in September of 2022, because that was my grocery bill in September '22. That affordability cheque is gone. How am I paying for my groceries in September 2023? How am I paying for my groceries August 2023? How am I going to pay for those groceries and make sure that my power bill is paid when everything just keeps getting more expensive?

Or you're hearing about concerns in long-term care, seniors' homes, as we just saw recently, today we talked about. We had people from a seniors' home here in Regina having to move. Those are the concerns that people are talking about on the doorstep, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're talking about their child's classroom bursting at the seams. They are not talking about, well I am very worried about pronouns. Again not one parent. We can't point to a single one that would come out and say, I was worried. No. These are not the issues that we're

hearing.

And this is what the Premier would have heard if he wasn't absent all summer long. You know, one summer we have a closed-door sovereignty tour with a separatist, developing a document that, you know, in their words, really won't do anything but will kind of draw a line in the sand. And we've seen another line-in-the-sand-type document come out.

And this summer, when the chance to actually get in front of voters comes around, he's not here. He's not there. I don't think we can point to a single social media post, photo. No one saw him. He was gone. He was MIA [missing in action]. And I really think that would have really changed some of these feelings. But again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've questioned this, the validity of the reason why this whole emergency session on this issue has come forward. Something else is amiss here.

So again I just want to say to my new colleagues from Regina Coronation Park, Regina Walsh Acres, and to my new colleague from Lumsden-Morse, congratulation on your wins. As someone who recently has gone through that process, I know just that whole process is something like you'll never do in your life. If someone told me, I want to represent my community so I am going to work from 8 to 10 p.m. for 60 days in a row knocking doors and talking to people. It was an experience of a lifetime. It was, it really was. So, Regina Coronation Park, congratulations. I was just saying, just saying congratulations.

So I guess what I'm going with this is when you start to ponder the question, it's like in these times, where we've got these issues that Saskatchewan people are facing, who has really, really, truly been visible? Who's been on the front lines? Who's been not just hearing but actively listening to parents' concerns from day one? And I'm going to talk about parents' concerns because we're talking about Bill 137.

Who has been hearing, not just hearing but actively listening to parents? Who's been on their side while, you know, our Premier goes on sovereignty tours and disappears for by-elections? I can tell you who has been, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is the member from Regina Lakeview, the leader of the Saskatchewan NDP and our formidable Leader of the Official Opposition. She remains steadfast, grounded, and ceaselessly active in our communities.

She has been on the side of parents this whole time. She has the ear of parents. She's been on the doorsteps all summer long in Walsh Acres, Coronation Park. She went to Lumsden. And I can attest to this because in Meewasin, we door knocked all the time. I still have conversations with people in Meewasin who had conversations with our leader, great conversations. It was like, I saw your leader on the doorstep. She was in my neighbourhood.

And I understand the job, I'm sure, as a head of government in a province isn't easy, but there's opportunities. You can make time in a schedule.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our leader has been standing with parents. She's been listening to parents' concerns each and every day. Our leader has been on the ground, getting the work done, and winning over the hearts and minds of all who meet her. And here's a little bit of what she's had to say:

If they want to talk about education, we're prepared to talk about education. We're prepared to debate their record, which frankly has failed the children of this province for over a decade. It's one thing to have differences, but to see politicians willingly stoke that division for their political ends, I think it is more disappointment for people.

Just strong words. Again, she says, "to be willing to make vulnerable kids more vulnerable, it's not the kind of leadership that a lot of people want to see from their government."

This week alone, this week and last, our leader stood with students at a French school in Saskatoon who had a hole in their roof. They had been visited by a minister and an MLA from Saskatoon, along with a couple of our MLAs. And that hole still existed till October 6th when the school was flooded. That's where our leader has been.

She's also stood by a parent of a child who committed suicide when supports were not present. She stood by that parent who came to this legislature demanding the government pause a dangerous policy and to provide more supports. That's where the Saskatchewan NDP have been on this issue, with parents the whole time, talking about the issues that matter most to parents.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to review through the legislation a bit here and just kind of go a little . . . a few points. I've got some time, eh? Okay, okay. I'll take the time. Okay. No need to rush through this. This is important.

So I want to go through the legislation that we have before us: *Bill 137, An Act to amend The Education Act, 1995 respecting parental rights*. We've got some citations here off the hop. And then we go into definitions:

"PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

"Definitions

197.1 In this section and in sections 197.2 to 197.4:

'pupil' includes a child who is attending kindergarten or a prekindergarten program in the school;

'school' includes a registered independent school[s];

So okay, so this actually will have to affect all the schools in Saskatchewan. And then we have here:

"Rights of parents and guardians

197.2 Subject to the other provisions of this Act and to regulations, a parent or guardian of a pupil has the right to:

(a) act as the primary decision-maker with respect to the pupil's education;

Okay.

(b) be informed on a regular basis of the pupil's attendance, behaviour and academic achievement in school;

Okay, good, check. Has been happening, has been happening.

(c) consult with the pupil's teachers and other employees of the school with respect to the pupil's courses of study and academic achievement;

Perfect.

(d) have access to the pupil's school file;

Well we heard from the member from Saskatoon Eastview this happens all the time.

(e) receive information respecting the courses of study available to the pupil, including online learning, and to make decisions as to which courses . . . the pupil enrolls in;

I'm not a lawyer. I have questions on this, but I'm going to continue to go through it and . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Thank you, thank you so much. We're just going to kind of review. Okay, a continued section. Education, Parents' Bill of Rights.

(f) be informed of the code of conduct and administrative policies, including discipline and behaviour management policies, of the school;

Check, already happening.

(g) be informed pursuant to sections 153 and 154 of any disciplinary action or investigation taken by the school in relation to the pupil's conduct;

Check, already happening.

(h) if the pupil has been expelled from school, request a review and reconsideration of the expulsion in accordance with subsection 155(3) after the expiration . . . year;

Okay, so they have a chance to appeal the expulsion, good. Probably already happening. Haven't been involved in an expulsion so I'm not too sure how the process goes, but we'll checkmark it.

(i) pursuant to subsections 160(4) and 161(7), be informed and consulted in relation to the pupil's school attendance . . .

Perfect. We have apps for that in Saskatchewan. There's also the phone system. Things might've changed since the last time I was in school.

(j) be consulted in accordance with section 178 or . . . [review a request] in accordance with section 178.1 in relation to the pupil's capacity to learn;

Good, we're making sure that we're connecting. So there's a connection right there. Now the one question we have is that there are lacks of services in that area. That's a big concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(k) in accordance with sections 182 and 183, excuse the pupil from participating in the opening exercises

mentioned in those sections;

Okay, so now we're going . . .

(l) be consulted in accordance with section 190 before any medical or dental examination or treatment is provided to the pupil pursuant to that section;

Okay, already happening.

[14:00]

(m) if sexual health content is to be presented to pupils in the school:

(i) at least 2 weeks before the sexual health content is presented to the pupils, be informed by the principal of:

Okay, yes, already happening.

(A) the subject-matter . . . [should be shared]

Already happening, and

(B) the dates on which the sexual health content is to be presented to the pupils;

Already happening.

(ii) if the parent or guardian so chooses, withdraw the pupil from the presentation of the sexual health content by giving written notice . . .

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is already happening in our schools in Saskatchewan.

(n) in accordance with section 197.4, if the pupil is under 16 years of age, provide consent before the pupil's teachers and other employees of the school use the . . . new gender-related preferred name or gender identity at school;

All right, Mr. Speaker, here we go. This is the newest section, something that we're adding. Something that as a policy previously put forward, has been paused by the judiciary branch of our democracy. I'll come back to it in a second. The next point is:

(o) be a member of the school community council or the conseil d'école, as the case may be, of the school.

Perfect. All right. So, so far, of one line, everything has been happening already. I'm going to keep going and then we'll come back.

“Responsibilities of parents and guardians
197.3 A . . . [parents of a] guardian of a pupil shall:

(a) cooperate fully with the pupil's teachers and other employees of the school to ensure the pupil complies with the code of conduct and administrative policies, including discipline and behaviour management

policies . . .

Okay. Okay, check. Happening in our schools.

(b) in accordance with section 156, take all reasonable measures to ensure the pupil attends school.

Excellent. Already happening in Saskatchewan schools. Now we get into our:

“Consent for change to gender identity

197.4(1) If a pupil who is under 16 years of age requests that the pupil’s new gender-related preferred name or gender identity be used at school, the pupil’s teachers and other employees of the school shall not use the new gender-related preferred name or gender identity unless consent is first obtained from the pupil’s parent or guardian.

So I guess this is a new clause, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I’m wondering, are we going to have, like, legislative security go into schools and like, police these situations? Like so, okay, I’m going to come in and check and make sure that everyone’s using their, like . . . You look like a boy; are you using a boy’s name? Is that what’s going to happen? Like, how are we policing this? Because that’s really what I’d like to know.

And this is really where, again, line 1 of the policy that UR Pride went to court over, the policy that we knew threw up alarm bells the minute it was read, this is where the school environment becomes less safe for queer and trans students, because now — and my colleague mentioned this — the home room teacher, who stood at the front of the classroom and said, don’t tell me.

You know, like, what an awful position to be in as a human being to say, don’t confide in me. Whatever relationship that we could develop, whatever trust, you know, this school year, don’t. I am not a safe person because the government tells me that I have to out you to your parents if I want to affirm who you are. That’s basically what this is lining out.

And here’s the next, the kicker here:

(2) If it is reasonably expected that obtaining parental consent as mentioned in subsection (1) is likely to result in physical, mental, or emotional harm to the pupil, the principal shall direct the pupil to the appropriate professionals, who are employed or retained by the school, to support and assist the pupil in developing a plan to address the pupil’s request with the pupil’s parent . . .

So a student comes forward. They would like to go by a different name. Now we’re being very specific here, gendered names. And the teacher says, okay. Well I have to ask your parent. And the student says, well, teacher, my parent has said that if their child was ever gay, I will throw them out of my house. Maybe they saw it on a TV program while they were watching a television show. They saw two gay characters on TV and the child is sitting with their parent and the parent says, ugh. They’re pushing this on us. If my kid ever came out, I’d kick them out of my house.

That is a reasonable scenario for children to hear. And that’s what this child would be bringing forward to their teacher. You know

what, Mr. or Mrs. Teacher? My parent has said that if one of their kids has ever come out, they would be kicked out of their house. And so this policy is saying okay, well then the teacher says, well then we’ve got to get you to appropriate resources because before I can affirm your identity and maybe call you by a different name, I have to go get you on a waiting list for a psychologist or social worker. So we’re on a 100- to 200-kid-deep list. And I have some questions about that later in my speech here.

So to affirm, a student who has told the teacher that there is a reasonable expectation that by obtaining that consent — by sending that consent letter home — that child will come to emotional, physical, or mental harm. They still have to go through the process.

And if the process doesn’t work, if the student says, you know what, I can’t. I get on the waiting list. I’m going to stay in the closet for who knows how long it is to get through 100 or 200 other students. I talk to the counsellor. I tell the counsellor I really feel like I can’t come out to my parents. Declined. No, we can’t do it. Stay in the closet. I cannot affirm who you are. I cannot respect who you want to be because we can’t fulfill the process that is getting the — how is it — appropriate professionals which our child advocate has said do not exist or do not exist in enough capacity to deal with this. And then our Education minister said, oh it’s ample. A lot of questions here, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And this is really where the kicker comes in:

(3) Pursuant to subsection 33(1) of the . . . *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, this section is declared to operate notwithstanding sections 2, 7 and 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

(4) Pursuant to section 52 of *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, 2018*, [that we updated in 2014 to include gender identity and gender expression, that] this section operates notwithstanding *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, 2018*, particularly sections 4, 5 and 13.

It’s an admission. We’re not going to wait for the courts to do it because we know the courts are going to strike this down. We know that this will violate the rights of children. It will roll back the human rights of trans and queer youth in our province. It will keep them in the closet, and they know it. They’ve got the notwithstanding clause in there rolling it back.

What’s next? Labour? Folks with disabilities? That’s the real question because this is just the tip of the iceberg. And we’ve already canvassed that Social Services and Corrections have completely different policy books. They’re following the human rights code. But in the classrooms, no.

And here’s really where it gets really, really interesting for the people watching at home. This is what we used to call CYA [cover your ass]. I used to work . . . where I used to work, we would call . . . and it’s not really . . . Cover your butt, CYA. You can extrapolate on what I’m trying to say. Cover. You know, you want to make sure your bases are covered when you’re going out. Here’s where we cover the government. Yeah, cover it. Yeah.

(5) No action or proceeding based on any claim . . . (of) loss or damage resulting from the enactment or

implementation of this section or of a regulation or policy related to this section . . . shall be commenced against:

- (a) the Crown in right of Saskatchewan;
 - (b) . . . [any] member or former member of Executive Council;
 - (c) a board of education, the conseil scolaire, the SDLC or a registered independent school; or
 - (d) any employee of the Crown in right of Saskatchewan or of a board of education, the conseil scolaire, the SDLC or a registered independent school.
- (6) Every claim for loss or damage resulting from the enactment or implementation of this section or of a regulation or [this] policy . . . to this section is extinguished.”

Yeah, so (a) we know this isn't going to fly because we're using the notwithstanding clause to override *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* that the Saskatchewan Party government brought in in 2014 unanimously. Check. We're going to use the notwithstanding clause to overwrite the Charter-protected rights of children. And if, and if the irreparable harm that Justice Megaw so carefully laid out, if the irreparable harm happens, don't think about suing us, because we've got our butts covered. CYA.

Well again, I'm not a lawyer, but I play one on TV. And we know that irreparable harm will come to a child. I can't wait to see you all in court to see how this holds up. Because harm will happen. Loss or damage. I hate the word "loss" in this situation. I hate to think that any family in Saskatchewan would find loss as per this policy because people . . . We've seen it happen. We had a parent come to this legislature who lost their child to suicide. A gender-diverse child and a parent who did absolutely everything they, absolutely everything they could, and they could not get the supports they needed. But don't worry. The government has ensured that they have this section of the bill. They won't take any damages. You cannot bring this up in court. We won't hear it. Well again we'll see.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that really concludes my canvass, my walk-through of Bill 137. Some interesting points. I think I've really laid out a lot of my feelings and opposition to the section, section (n), you know, making sure that people under 16, you know, if they want to use a name or pronoun that they prefer that they get consent. I've explained why this will cause irreparable harm, I think. If I haven't please tell me. I will continue on that.

And I have discussed a lot of the problems that lay in the reasonable expected, you know, if a student comes forward with emotional or . . . this says that physical, emotional, or mental abuse will happen to a pupil. We've talked about that and I will talk about it at great length. But I think that for now I'm going to move on with this and continue on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I basically canvassed here is that this legislation confirms our worst fears. It's hard not to be defensive or hurt or upset about policies that are aimed at one's community. That's how I started this debate off on. You know, I ran as an

MLA to represent the people of Saskatoon Meewasin in a city that I grew up and love.

[14:15]

But also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ran to bring a voice to a minority community that had not been authentically represented in this Chamber before. I ran to represent a minority community with a history of being oppressed. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ran to represent a minority community that has had a history of oppression. I have a duty to raise the voices of my community, and nowhere in my career thus far has it been more pertinent.

And it is reasonable that when policies that I know to be harmful are introduced against members of my community that I will challenge them with all my energy. We will challenge them. And as I've mentioned, if this government wants to call back the legislature for an emergency session to debate affordability, health care, education, or the economy, things that matter most to people, we are here for it. But, Mr. Speaker, to be called back to this Chamber to see the rights of queer and trans children rolled back using the hammer that is the notwithstanding clause, I have to say there are no words allowed in this Chamber that accurately express my feelings for this government decision.

Mr. Speaker, the policies set forward are dangerous. We have canvassed that. They will cause harm. To give weight and voice to policies like this that encourage and sow division in our province, that target vulnerable groups all in an attempt to distract from the government's abysmal record when it comes to health care, education, jobs, the economy is the saddest day, one of the saddest days in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am furious that as a queer person I have to stand in this room in the face of a government that is so willingly spouting division and distrust of the queer community and is so willing to nullify the rights of children, rolling back hard-fought human rights of trans and queer children, a population that is the most vulnerable and at-risk community in our society. I am furious.

But as a queer person in 2023, our community is still asking better, still asking better of their government. We are still asking for basic human decency. We are asking for a government to choose not to use dog whistle politics that affect the lives of our community members all for political gain, all for political smokescreen, all to cover up an abysmal record that this government does not want to talk about, all to change the channel. It's shameful, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Frankly, I'm furious because these policies are doing exactly what the Saskatchewan Party intended. They have begun to make deep cracks in the facade of our province being a welcoming and inclusive place. And to gamble with the lives of children, to gamble with the lives of the most vulnerable children is the lowest of the low.

As I've said before and I will say again, we want parental inclusion in children's lives. We know that kids do best when their parents are involved, when their parents or guardians are involved in their children's lives. Every family is different.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said, the only thing I would ever want . . . If

I could do one thing in this time in this Chamber, if I could make one thing happen, if I could pass legislation that would make absolutely every family in this province accept their queer and trans child then I would be done. I would have done the work I needed to do. But, Mr. Speaker, we've canvassed this and we know that's not how it's going to go.

That's not what this policy is about. It's certainly not transparency for parents. It's cold. It's calculated. It's a target of trans and queer kids, a minority of a minority, 79 per cent of the population, less than 1 per cent. The Premier and his government have targeted members of my community for political gain, and I will not stand for it, and we will not stand for it.

And make no mistake. Again I'll come back to it. We will always champion parents' involvement in education. We will always champion our education system and its teachers. And the Saskatchewan NDP will always stand up for queer and trans kids every single day of the week.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm so thankful that the members of Saskatoon Meewasin chose me to represent them.

An Hon. Member: — Us too.

Mr. Teed: — Thank you so much. I'm thankful to the people of Saskatoon Meewasin who put their trust in an out, queer man, put me in this role so that the day that the government decided that they wanted to take on the queer community, that they would have to look me in the face — not a lot of them are right now, I'll say that — they would have to look me in the face and hear the voices of queer and trans people and their allies raised in this Chamber. That is the true power of representation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm also so proud to stand beside the largest official opposition since 2011, one that has taken a principled stand on education, on parents' involvement in education, who has stood with parents every single day, listened — not just listening but hearing their concerns. Mr. Speaker, this is the strongest crew of allies anybody could ask for.

So today as I stand in this Chamber, I want to say that the only gay agenda I have in front of me today is to keep queer and trans kids alive. I want them to stay alive as long as it gets better, to the point where it gets better. We always talk about that. Man, we're going to have to bring that campaign back. That's the saddest part a little bit. It does get better and now it might take a little longer. Because let's be clear, these policies that are put forth will cause irreparable harm for the children caught in the crosshairs.

And in that court injunction that had spurred, you know, all this emergency debate here in this House, you know the Justice . . . I'm moving into my next section called irreparable harm. The Justice in that case ordered the pause of the government's pronoun and naming policy because in the absence of action, on his belief, affected students of this policy would face irreparable harm. It's really something to say that even in the face of words like that, this government continues to move forward.

And, Mr. Speaker, to stand here and say that I know that harm will come to a child is something beyond putting us all in this place, really. Mr. Deputy Speaker, my community has had to

fight tooth and nail for acceptance for years. For years we've had to fight for acceptance in every walk of life. We've seen harm come to us. We've seen harm possibly come to us. We've been in situations where there could be harm, you know, whoever it is in this community, be it queer and trans youth or queer and trans adults. And it's because of this irreparable harm that Justice Megaw so elegantly outlays is why I would personally always oppose policies that force teachers to out vulnerable queer and trans youth.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to enter into the record some statistics in regards to the queer and trans community. Again wishing that, as a member of a minority community, we weren't always put in the place — again I thank my colleagues who have canvassed this so eloquently as well; you know, we're all in this together, but you know — putting anyone in the place to have to read some of this data. It's a tough spot.

So firstly I'd like to start off with some 2020-21 census data. And this was the first time that the Government of Canada ever counted . . . who counted trans people. I don't really like to say counted. This was the first time that it allowed people to self-identify that they were trans. So it found out that 1 in 300 people in Canada aged 15 and older are transgender or nonbinary.

And it was really interesting that when I started to dig through this, Canada actually is the first country to collect and publish data on gender diversity from a national census. That's something to say, you know, that we're the first ones to hit this. And it makes me kind of think back to those years when, you know, the former federal guru boss of the Saskatchewan Party, Stephen Harper, tried to cancel censuses. Because, you know, if you don't have the data, how can you . . . Why would we need to worry about policies that affect trans people if, well we don't even really know how many they are? It really makes me beg the question.

So it continued on their website: while Canada census data and surveys from other countries are not strictly comparable, they provide valuable insight into gender diversity globally. In Canada, 0.2 per cent of the population aged 18 and older was transgender in 2021; Belgium, 0.5 per cent among people aged 18 to 75 in 2021; and New Zealand, 0.5 per cent among people aged 18 and older in 2020 have also published representative survey-based data on their transgender populations.

Other countries have published 2021 data on transgender people, using crowd-sourcing and non-representative surveys, including Ireland, 0.6 among 18 and older; England and Wales, 0.6 among 16 and older; and the United States, 0.8 among 18 and older. The vast majority of nonbinary people — this was interesting — nonbinary individuals in Canada live in an urban setting. Urban living was more popular amongst nonbinary individuals than among transgender and cisgender individuals. For 2021, 9 in 10 nonbinary people aged 15 and older in Canada, 92 per cent, lived in an urban centre of over 100,000 people.

This was another heading from the census: "Transgender or nonbinary populations have reported poorer mental health outcomes." For example, almost two-thirds of transgender and nonbinary individuals, 65 per cent, reported poor or fair mental health, five times the proportion of those who are cisgender, 11 per cent. Five times. Transgender and nonbinary people were

also more likely to have seriously contemplated suicide in their lifetime than those who are cisgender, 45 per cent versus 16 per cent.

Now I'm going to read a few statistics about the queer and trans youth. "Research demonstrates that the use of chosen names in association . . ." And I guess I should quickly preface this. It's this data that, had the Ministry of Education deigned to consult stakeholders before dreaming up this policy on a napkin at Memories . . . sorry, before this government dreamed it up and then passed it over to the Ministry of Education. But had the Ministry of Education then come in and done the stakeholder engagement, they would have found this.

First line: "Research demonstrates that the use of chosen names is associated with reduction in depression and suicidal ideation and attempts among trans youth." Number one. If we affirm kids in their classrooms, it does wonders, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for their mental health. The simple act of affirming someone when they come to you as a teacher and say, you know what, I think that I'm just really exploring my identity, and I think I'd like to try a different name — just like we read from Renn — you know, I don't know if this is something, but I want to try it out.

And we know, we also have statistics that show that most of these children do know, that like a huge . . . It's just a huge majority know what they feel in their lives. And if any kind of adult in the school system just recognizes, it shows a total reduction in depression, suicidal ideation and attempts among trans youth. It just seems so simple to me. That your first line of your policy, we need consent. We know it's going to harm kids. Here's the research.

[14:30]

Next point: "High levels of school connectedness is linked to 85 per cent lower odds of suicide attempts compared to youth with lower connectedness."

And the connectedness they're talking about is the simple acknowledgement and affirmation of the child. That's school connectedness. Eighty-five per cent lower odds. And it's just, it's stunning to me. To put this out there to my colleagues who are plowing forward with this policy . . . And we have data in front of us. We've seen data that shows it will cause irreparable harm. We have a Justice. We have the government's Children's Advocate. We have data.

School populations that deviate from the practice of affirming trans students' gender identities, including personal names and pronouns, risk further contributing to the unjust and avoidable psychological distress caused by invalidating environments.

The legislation that we are debating in this House, Bill 137, forcing teachers to get consent, is deviating from the practice of affirming trans students. Plain and simple. It says:

School policies that deviate from the practice of affirming trans students' gender identities, including personal names and pronouns, risk further contributing to the unjust and avoidable psychological distress caused by invalidating environments.

We are creating an invalidating environment in our schools with this legislation, with use of the notwithstanding clause. Plain and simple. Clear as day. I hope everyone on that side of the House understands this. Good. Did our homework today.

A 2019 survey reported that 10 per cent of trans youth respondents had experienced physical violence in the past year by a family member, and approximately 14 per cent had been sexually abused by a family member.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, like it's just, it's hard to read these things. It's hard to stand here and talk about these things. It's just, it's emotionally gut-wrenching in a lot of ways. But this is our job. This is what we have to do. Ten per cent, physical violence.

We had a guest here yesterday, and I'm going to read the letter. Sixty-six per cent of queer and trans youth come from homes that are unsupportive. That's a statistic. Ten per cent.

For LGBTQ youth, social stigma about their sexual choices or identities can be particularly difficult. Stigma comes in many forms, such as discrimination, harassment, family disapproval, social rejection, and violence. This puts LGBTQ+ youth at increased risk for negative health outcomes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if there was another topic that I could throw on an emergency debate, this would be it right here, not debating whether we should be forcing teachers to out their students under the guise of that this might bring you closer to your students. We should be debating the crisis that we're seeing in vulnerable communities.

And let's not just stop at LGBTQ+ people. Let's look at all vulnerable communities in Saskatchewan, because certainly they are being ignored by this government — this government, this Premier, his ministers — ignoring vulnerable communities, ignoring children going to school hungry. Those are the emergency debates that we should be having, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Like instead of debating the rights of these poor vulnerable communities, let's debate the real issues. Because we're talking about some of the most vulnerable people in our society. You've got a marginalized community, and now we're going into the children, children-aged of a vulnerable community.

And I'll go into a little bit about why they are a vulnerable community if I really need to bring more data behind this. Firstly, trans and queer kids are at higher risk of homelessness than their straight and cisgender peers. Forty per cent of homeless youth identify as queer or trans in Canada. Let's let that sink in for a second. Why do we think that is? Because sometimes . . . And as we've mentioned, 66 per cent of queer and trans youth come from homes that are unsupportive. Sometimes a parent or guardian is not supportive. Sometimes they kick their kids out of their house. Sometimes those kids run away from home. They realize that they're not going to fight a winning battle at home and they leave.

You know, last week we recognized foster parents week, such an important thing to recognize. But one really has to wonder, why do we have foster parents? Well this is one reason. Because sometimes it takes other affirming and caring individuals in

someone's life to take them in. And thank you to every foster parent in this province who does that work. Thank you to every organization like Lulu's Lodge and the Pride Home in Saskatoon, at capacity. I don't know the data on Lulu's Lodge but I'm guessing it's also at capacity, also with a waiting list.

The community-based organizations that are doing the work that the government should be doing are at capacity with queer and trans youth because they get kicked out of their homes. I don't know how much more I can make it any clearer. And then there's the whole idea that our criminal justice system and social services system will have a different policy book than our education system.

Well it's a good thing I guess because we're going to be seeing kids getting kicked out of their homes when they want to come out and their parents kick them out. Hopefully our social services and our justice will continue to maintain Charter of Rights and Freedoms values and *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* and the United Nations declaration on the rights of children. Again I hate to give any ideas to this crew over here. Sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will continue to speak to the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you speak to experts, they cite studies that show that gender-diverse students who see identity invalidation, or feel less support from their parents, they have a higher likelihood of running away from home and being kicked out. Again in Canada 40 per cent of homeless youth identify as queer or trans.

I have a letter here that I would like to read into the record. And I firstly want to thank everyone who answered my call for voices — from our community, from allies, from parents — that I put out. We got hundreds of responses. I was absolutely amazed at the response from the community.

This letter is anonymous. They wish to go by S.P.N. They're from Saskatchewan.

I wanted to share a deeply personal experience with you that has had a lasting impact on my life and shaped the person who I am today. It is a story of being outed to my parents as a 14-year-old kid and the subsequent challenge it posed.

At 14 I had began grappling with my understandings of my sexual orientation. It was a confusing and emotional time. I had not yet found the courage to share this aspect of my identity with anyone, including my parents. I wanted to approach the subject on my terms when I felt ready, but unfortunately this is not how it unfolded.

One day someone I trusted breached my privacy and shared this deeply personal information with my parents without my consent. When they confronted me about it, I felt fear, vulnerability, and betrayal wash over me. The violation of my trust was painful and I struggle to find words to explain my feelings.

The impact on my relationship with my parents was immediate and profound. It strained our connection, and the openness and trust we had once shared were shattered. My parents seemed distant and judgmental. Our communication became strained, and I felt growing a sense of isolation in

my home.

The toll on my mental health was significant. I experienced anxiety and depression as I grappled with the aftermath of being outed. The feeling of being exposed before I was ready, and a subsequent lack of understanding and support from my parents deepened my emotional turmoil. It was a period of profound self-doubt and pain.

In sharing this deeply personal experience, I hope to shed light on respecting an individual's right to come out on their terms. Outing someone without consent can have far-reaching and long-lasting consequences on their mental health, relationships, and overall well-being. Parents and guardians must create an environment where children feel safe and supported when they are ready to share their identities.

Submitted from S.P.N. to be shared anonymously.

I thought that was a really impactful, one of hundreds of impactful letters that I received and fit well here.

Queer and trans youth face troubling high levels of family violence. That was another statistic. Got a comment here about inviting certain individuals to the legislature, but maybe I'll continue here.

Second: queer and trans youth are at higher risk of self-harm and suicide. Again when queer and trans youth experience identity invalidation, they are at higher risk of self-harm and ultimately suicide. Suicide is the leading cause of death from 15 to 19.

I'm going to stop there for a second because one of my colleagues made a really interesting point. You know, if suicide is the leading cause of death from folks who are 15 to 19, let's add that to the list of emergency debates that we should be having in Saskatchewan. How are we solving that problem? We've seen a Mental Health and Addictions minister stand up and list off record investments. Well the record investments aren't enough. They're not doing the job. This is an emergency debate that we should be having in Saskatchewan.

I'll continue. Transgender students are seven times more likely to commit suicide than their peers — seven times more than their cisgender peers. A previous suicide is the biggest indicator of a future attempt. As legislators, we have a duty to consider how our policies will affect the most vulnerable. That's our job, isn't it? To be willingly moving forward with policies that will harm children, it's unfathomable. That's the emergency debate today, that we're going to move forward with a policy that will likely increase suicide rates in Saskatchewan.

We know that forcing teachers to out queer kids will put both teachers and those students in horrible situations. We know that some families will wrap supports around their children and some will not. This policy will lead to worse mental health outcomes and will increase the chance of self-harm and suicide. These statistics alone should be enough to pause this.

This is exactly why the Children's Advocate wrote against this policy. This is exactly why Justice Megaw paused the policy. This is why the Human Rights Commissioner resigned over this

policy. This is the Saskatchewan that the Saskatchewan Party is overseeing. Disrespect to a Children's Advocate, policies that will cause irreparable harm, human rights commissioners resigning over legislation being put forward — that's the legacy. That's the policy book. That's the Saskatchewan that we live in right now.

Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again I go back to consultation. If they had consulted anyone, they would have heard all this. You know, we have a former minister of Education say on the CBC that, when presented with these facts, "Oh, I haven't read that study yet. There's a lot of studies out there." It's a real bad argument. We're telling you about it right now.

[14:45]

And my colleague, you know, canvassed this: in the same interview, the former minister of Education was asked, what would he do if his kids came out? He would love them. But it's pretty shocking that in the same interview, when presented with these facts, "I haven't seen that study yet." Well now you have. Presented. And had you spoken to experts, you would have heard about it before.

This is from an article that came from *The Globe and Mail* from an article entitled, and I quote, "Scott Moe stands against vulnerable trans youth." The author writes,

The judge accepted the abundant evidence that gender-dysphoric children are at high risk of hurting themselves or being hurt by others, of eventually quitting school, or ending up on the streets. The more support they can receive in school, if not at home, is better for their chances.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 137 will not provide those supports. They do not exist. These policies simply give voice through dog whistle politics that queer and trans people are less than. It's an open mike for hate. It puts an entire community at risk. Not only are we putting queer and trans kids at risk, we are fuelling rhetoric — rhetoric that has been around for many, many years, but it's bringing it back.

I have a third point here. An attack on queer and trans students is also an attack on neurodivergent students and children with intellectual disabilities. And parental rights legislation is very troubling for the disability community.

Studies on the correlations . . . There's a lot of overlap between autistic individuals and non-cisgender identities, showing remarkable correlations on the prevalence of this intersection. Gender dysphoria demonstration, a correlation as high as 13 times the non-autistic population base, and studies that are based on those accessing gender care clinics reported eight times higher, the same metric. Additionally about 35 per cent of autistic individuals identify as 2SLGBTQ+I [two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning plus, intersex] in some form.

We know with these statistics and the overlap that these policies will also disproportionately affect neurodivergent students and students with disabilities. People who experience an intellectual disability, including neurodivergence, are already at greater risk at being restricted from access to accessible and unbiased

education on sexuality and relationships and are often tightly controlled.

Now I'm going to preface this by, this really speaks more to the third-party sex ed, the removal of that from schools.

People who experience intellectual disability, including neurodivergence, are already at greater risk of being restricted from access to accessible and unbiased education on sexuality and relationships, and their often tightly controlled social circles typically limit exposure to diverse role models that would typically enable them to explore their own gender and sexual identities.

Third parties who are experts in the field of accessibility and disabilities-specific education have worked for decades to fill the gap in provincial curriculums by creating sexual health education resources that are accessible and meet all learning needs and now risk these resources being rendered useless.

The policy that the government is proposing restricting third-party sexual health education will absolutely be harmful to children who experience intellectual disability, including neurodivergence. More victims of these short-sighted policies.

The proposed policy will disproportionately impact children who experience intellectual disability, making them further vulnerable by limiting their access to sexual wellness education that was designed to be accessible to them, and by allowing individuals living with high-control family frameworks to be further restricted from healthy and normal development toward understanding their gender and sexuality.

Furthermore — and this is the point that struck me the most — moving human rights from the individual to another authority, e.g. the parent, is a threat to any person protected by *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*, under any protected grounds, including the entire disability community.

This is a slippery slope, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My colleagues have canvassed this. This is a very slippery slope to get on, because, what is the notwithstanding clause? Kind of like a gateway drug? You try it once and the next time it's another group. Oh, this policy doesn't really work for us. Our base is falling apart. Let's attack another minority group that we can rustle up some angst about. Hate, I should say.

Moving human rights from the individual to another authority, e.g. a parent, is a threat to any one person protected by *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* under any protected grounds, including the entire disability community. Parental rights being established in Saskatchewan would put the autonomy of all those who experience disability at risk, with potential implications extending far beyond the choice of name and pronoun.

Mr. Speaker, queer and trans lives are on the line, and we must act because if even one child comes to harm, that's too many.

I want to move into some conversations around ample supports. Our Education minister used the word "ample supports" in an interview recently. In response to irreparable harm that this policy would indeed inflict, we recently heard the Minister of Education on the John Gormley show quoted, saying that ample

supports exist for students in our schools.

Education Minister Jeremy Cockrill appeared on *Gormley* Wednesday to say students in Saskatchewan receive appropriate support inside and outside the classroom to address concerns relating to gender identity. “We believe there are ample supports for children.”

Cockrill acknowledges some concerns. “I have heard from some who are concerned that this outs kids or puts kids at risk, but the reality is that we have supports in schools. We have counsellors. We have mental health first aid professionals who are trained in every single school in the province. So we have numerous supports in the community and outside the school context.”

Let’s look into this a bit. Quoted from the *StarPhoenix*, Samantha Becotte, president of the STF:

“There aren’t enough mental health supports in our schools,” says Becotte, who has met with school counsellors who have caseloads exceeding 100 to 200 students. Most counsellors are left to deal with crises that arise. She says divisions are already at max capacity if not beyond capacity.

So frankly who should we believe here, the Minister of Education or the STF? This is what the minister calls ample supports: school counsellors with caseloads exceeding 100 and 200 students. That is “ample” by the Saskatchewan Party government. And from the government’s own budget records, here’s some more interesting information: they show that over the last year, the government added less than one full-time counsellor in our schools province-wide. They cut two child psychologists, and have cut 66 fewer classroom teachers. Meanwhile enrolment increased in Saskatchewan by 3,840 students.

Mr. Speaker, is this what ample supports are supposed to look like? Because I haven’t seen any announcement out of this government hiring new supports. Zilch. Nada. School counsellors with caseloads of 100 to 200 students. Funding one new part-time school counsellor in the entire province. Cutting two child psychologists from Saskatchewan schools. Slashing 66 teaching positions. That’s all while the schools burst to the seams with enrolment of 3,840 more students.

Mr. Speaker, this is a new minister on this file. But when the stakes are this high — I would say causing irreparable harm to queer and trans youth makes the stakes pretty high — when the lives of community members are on the line, and hate and division are being sowed, I simply don’t believe in giving him the benefit of the doubt.

He should do better on this file. He should know how poor the supports are for queer and trans youth in our province. When children’s lives are at stake, he should darn well know his file backwards and forwards. Read those binders that they plopped on your desk when you signed the document that said, yeah, I’ll be your Education minister; I’ll fall on that sword for you. Read the binders and then you can go on to *Gormley* and spout about ample supports, because ample supports, it’s frankly a ludicrous argument in the face of these statistics.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one has to wonder, is the Minister of

Education just simply uninformed, having not stepped in a Saskatchewan school ever since graduating high school? Or is the Minister of Education just so out of touch with the complex needs of youth in our province that he believes school counsellors with caseloads of 100 to 200 kids constitutes ample supports?

And I’m going to quote this again. This is from the legislation.

If it is reasonably expected that obtaining parental consent as mentioned in subsection (1) is likely to result in physical, mental or emotional harm to the pupil, the principal shall direct the pupil to the appropriate professionals, who are employed or retained by the school, to support and assist the pupil in developing a plan to address the pupil’s request with the pupil’s parent or guardian.

So I have a lot of questions on this policy here if you’ll entertain them, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If a queer and trans student approaches a teacher in our school system . . . In a couple of days this will be the law of the land. Thanks to rule changes and the notwithstanding clause, this will happen in a couple of days.

If a queer and trans student approaches a teacher and wants to change their name and pronouns, wants to be affirmed in their classroom, but knows their parents will never sign such a document, that even a document going home could mean abuse, being ejected from the home, could mean their home life becomes intolerable, will the queer and trans kids get to skip the queues to the detriment of the rest of the student body? Because waiting for appointments with the school counsellor, psychologists, social workers employed to be retained by the schools, how do we know that queer and trans students are going to get a timely appointment?

Or will queer and trans students look at their peers on 100 to 200 caseloads and simply stay in the closet? Simply say, this isn’t worth it; I’m going to struggle in silence because it’s going to be who knows how long before I’ll get an appointment with a school counsellor or a psychologist or anyone retained by the school division.

This basically seems like stay-in-the-closet legislation with the dramatic cuts to mental health that we’ve seen in this province. It’s our schools saying, we don’t really want to have to deal with this; stay in the closet until you’re 16; I don’t want to hear about it. Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell policy in Saskatchewan schools. That’s what we’ve got here under a Premier and a minister who are being led by the nose by the member from Saskatchewan Rivers, whose deputy tweeted today: “Thank you so much for taking these pages out of my policy book.”

Who is really leading this crew? Is it the member from Saskatchewan Rivers and her deputy, who ran in Lumsden-Morse, who took 20 per cent away from the candidate who ran there? I don’t know anymore, because they’re sure claiming a lot of victory, a lot of victory laps on this one. You know, who was it? Like which crew of disgruntled backbenchers were the ones that came forward with the ultimatum: we’re going to cross the floor if you guys don’t hammer down on these trans and queer kids in these schools.

It’s a good question. I’ve been hearing the rumours. Haven’t really heard who, but it’s a tough time keeping together this big

kind of, yeah, Frankenstein monster. I think they've tried to remove all the Liberal parts by now. Like I mean they've got Pierre Poilievre coming to their convention. Why not Justin Trudeau? I mean this was a coalition between the Saskatchewan Liberals, some Liberals and kind of this like dead-in-the-water Conservative Party, like a Frankenstein monster like we've never seen. Well let's just pull off the arm. Those Liberals are gone. Well actually we're retiring one over here. One hasn't stood up to talk recently. Oh I think our Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, she used to be a Liberal. I wonder if we'll be . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I think you better get back on track, yes. Really.

Mr. Teed: — We're getting off the topic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I apologize. But I'm just saying what's . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, thank you. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I apologize for getting off topic. I apologize, Mr. Speaker. We'll get back on topic.

[15:00]

But I just, again, I come back to these questions. I just come back to these questions. You know, will these kids get to skip the line? What I see here is will kids be kept in the closet by these policies? Yes. Will students languish on waiting lists waiting for appointments with the "ample supports?" Yes, they will.

And if this process goes through, when a student declares that they suspect someone will . . . that they will come to reasonable harm or they could be kicked out of their house before the age of 16, this policy just won't work for them. No, not for you. No affirmation from a supporting adult, which we just learned is one of the few ways that we can reduce some of these statistics that we see that queer and trans people and youth face.

And really I ask specifically — and we're talking about Bill 137 — I ask specifically about queer and trans kids because at the end of the day it's trans kids that are being targeted here, gender-diverse kids. They're the ones who are being targeted by this policy. They are specifically being discriminated against based on their gender identity and gender expression that, under the former premier, were protected by *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*.

And we've asked this before, and this took me down a little bit of a rabbit hole, but I really think this . . . And my colleague canvassed Quebec. You know, will we turn on other minorities next? The Minister of Justice in question period answered and says that, well the notwithstanding clause is used in Quebec all the time. There was this period where every single piece of legislation had the notwithstanding clause in it as this kind of like rebellious notion that, you know, everything they did was going to be Quebec sovereignty, yeah.

But I'll remind the Minister of Justice that in the most recent uses that Quebec has put forward using the notwithstanding clause is hardly admirable. All I can wonder, is the Minister of Justice in Alberta not answering her emails anymore, so she has to go to Quebec? Is that like what we're doing now? I've got to find a new friend?

Because let's remind the Chamber, Quebec has used the notwithstanding clause most recently on two accounts. The first

is to discriminate against religious symbols. They are actively discriminating against populations based on displayable religious attire. I'll remind the Minister of Justice and give a warning to our new Minister of Education that in Quebec, where the notwithstanding clause has been used to quash Charter rights, is sitting with a vacancy of 8,558 teaching positions at the start of 2023 school year. Why? Well one can point directly to Quebec Bill 21 banning religious symbols in violation of the Charter, supported by the notwithstanding clause.

I'm going to read . . . This is from a CBC article. "What Quebec teachers say is behind acute staffing shortage — and what could solve it." I'll start the quote there.

Unlike some parents floored by the news, high school teacher Mike Wadden wasn't shocked to learn this week that the province [Quebec] was still short more than 8,500 teachers just days before heading back to class.

On Wednesday, Education minister Bernard Drainville [Drainville, I'm just going to say Drainville. I don't have the best French accent] revealed 8,558 teaching positions had yet to be filled — 1,859 full-time and 6,669 part-time in the public system, as the most recent data, and about 3,000 more than originally believed.

Quebec Minister of Education Drainville says that the government is doing everything in its power to get as many teachers as possible for the start of classes, but that Quebec will have to largely rely on many non-legally qualified teachers, meaning those without a teaching licence or a degree to fill the gaping needs. He said that at a minimum, the goal was to have at least one adult in every classroom to provide some sort of supervision. But without more support, he couldn't even guarantee that much.

The contingency plan raised eyebrows with many saying it devalues teachers and the profession as a whole.

I think so. I'm going to pause there and say, is this the Ministry of Education, the Saskatchewan plan to increase parental involvement in schools? Is that what Bill 137 is, use of the notwithstanding clause? Maybe those parents will, like, actually have to come work in the classroom. For free, yeah. That will bring parents closer to kids because they'll have to come and work in that school, like with no remuneration.

I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's time for the Minister of Education to hop on the phone with the Minister of Education in Quebec just to see how well his plan to quash the rights of individuals in his province is going at this point.

I'm going to come back to the article:

It comes back to the government not treating those in the teaching profession as professionals, said Steven Le Sueur, president of the Quebec professional association of teachers, a union with more than 8,000 members.

Unquote for a second. Wow, that seems really familiar to what we're hearing in Saskatchewan. Come back to the article.

Le Sueur says a host of unqualified and untrained people in

the classroom will be tough on anybody, and in turn makes it tough on students.

Jon Keane, an art teacher at Beaconsfield High School, says Drainville's comment was downright insulting. "I don't think it values the profession. It doesn't show a lot of respect. No flexibility on hiring teachers blocked by Bill 21."

In a Hail Mary attempt to help fill vacant spots, Drainville is urging those with a degree in a subject taught in schools to take a whack at teaching it. "If you have a B.A. in history, mathematics, chemistry, or French, why not try your hand at a new career? We have a place for you," says Drainville in a statement.

Wow, that's a good way to bring new people on board.

But there's no place for Fatemeh Anvari, a former elementary school teacher who was told she could no longer teach in her class in a Chelsea, Quebec classroom . . .

[Inaudible interjection] . . . Really? Oh my goodness. That's the member from Regina . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . We won't say that. Quiet. Eastern Quebec. We love Quebec now. We do now.

In a Chelsea, Quebec classroom in 2021 because she wears a hijab, which is not allowed under Bill 21, Quebec's secularism law. "The school did not want me to lose the classroom, but you know, there was no way out," she said. She had been working as a substitute teacher and had successfully applied to become full-time before being told the school had to cancel her contract using Bill 21.

The law, which passed in 2019, bars public school teachers and other civil servants in positions of authority from wearing religious symbols such as hijabs, crucifixes, or turbans while at work. Teachers who were wearing the hijab in class before the law came into effect were allowed to keep teaching, but their careers are limited. They cannot change jobs, schools, or boards. [Wow.] The law does not allow any new hires to wear the hijab or other religious symbols.

Despite the dire situation, Drainville says his government will not be touching the legislation. "The law has been voted," he said this week. "We don't want to revisit. There's no flexibility on that."

Anvari, who is currently working towards finishing her master's degree in education with years of teaching experience under her belt, says it's frustrating to hear the government is willing to hire someone with just a college diploma over her, regardless of the fact that there are people who are capable and skilful and able to teach. They are not allowed to because of their identity and the way they choose to present themselves.

End article.

So this is the use of the notwithstanding clause that our Minister of Justice is using as reference, as a reasonable tool. This is who she's looking up to. You can really see that they're taking from

a playbook here. You know, I was really worried that we were always taking from Alberta's playbook but now we're also looking in the other direction.

As I mentioned before, is this how we want to get parents involved in the classroom, is have them teach the class because the government simply just keeps quashing human rights?

But it's not much different here in Saskatchewan. The government is using the notwithstanding clause to force teachers to out vulnerable kids. They're going forward even though they know that it's in violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, you know, citing Quebec. Failing parents. Because at the end of the day, these policies aren't about building better relationships with parents and students, not with supports slashed, not with human rights being violated.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to move on here. I'm going to move on to some of my thoughts on parental involvement in education. We've kind of canvassed them a bit here already. What we've kind of heard so far is a premier and a government admiring another government that so eloquently likes to use the notwithstanding clause to quash the human rights in their provinces.

I want to say again that from the start, our party has been the one listening to parents, from day one. We really do believe that parents are crucial. There's no doubt about it. Parents or guardians, we need them involved. Their children will do better.

At our core, I believe that as Saskatchewanians we believe that all kids deserve respect. And the rolling back of queer and trans students' rights flies directly in the face of our provincial motto, "from many peoples, strength." And instead of focusing on building a strong public education system and ensuring families thrive, the government has decided to attack a minority for cheap political gain.

So let's just talk a bit about parental inclusion in education. As I've said, one of the most valuable, important things . . . We know experts are saying it, studies have shown it: parents engaged in their students' learning, those students do better. No one is calling into question that. No one is coming between parents, not a person on this side of the House, not a person on that side of the House, not a teacher in this province.

Every single student should be able to come to school and know it's a safe environment, no matter who they are, whatever their background is. They should know that teachers are working to build environments free of homophobia, Islamophobia, racism, misogyny. That's what teachers are trying to do here. If anything, teachers are trying to build school communities where every single student, no matter what their background, will thrive. It is sickening to me that we would dog whistle and say that teachers . . . villainizing that profession, a profession that works so hard. But instead we're using divisive policies to sow division. We're using dog whistle policies to rustle up some kind of feeling that teachers are teaching our kids to be gay.

I saw a post on Facebook from a teacher. It was like, if I was indoctrinating your kid, I would teach them to wear deodorant. I think it just sums it up for me. Teachers are working every single day in our province to build classrooms that are open and

welcome for all students of all backgrounds, and we have to support them. We have to.

We cannot follow the line of division and culture war because once you go down that path, you're not coming out. I think Yoda said it best: once you go down the dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny. This is the moment to turn around. You can reject the dark side. Stay in the light, I urge you. I mean, it's so serious. Once you start playing these cards, these are the bedfellows that you're making, people who are willingly stoking division, hate, and fear.

And as I've already kind of mentioned, we've kind of looked through what this bill won't do. And we've looked through the bill, and we've seen like it's already enshrining so many things that are already happening in our schools. And even speaking with teachers who again please . . . I am going to give a shout-out to teachers of Saskatchewan. You are doing amazing work. Let's just like give them some love. They're doing amazing work every single day to provide the best education. I've talked about this. They put in extra hours to connect with parents, to make sure that those lesson plans are planned. I'm sure you did the same. You know, like the time that you were putting in every single day.

And we've said if the government really cared about kids or they really cared about parents and their relationships, there would be so many things that we could address.

[15:15]

We could address, you know, affordable, accessible child care. We had folks in this legislature today calling on the government to get back to the table and make affordable and accessible child care work for people in Saskatchewan.

A friend of mine told me, she said she's on a list. She will not get a spot in a \$10-a-day daycare until her child is five. They were just born. So maybe they'll get child care by the time they're in kindergarten or grade 1.

Another friend of mine — and I've been receiving emails about this recently — a friend of mine told me they will see their child care fees skyrocket after their child ages out. So at five, once your child turns six . . . Her child will turn six in January, but they won't be eligible to start school till the following December. But they won't be eligible for the \$10-a-day daycare. And thankfully my colleague the critic for Social Services and child care has written on this, because I was going to talk to her about it. They'll age out and the fees will jump astronomically for those eight, nine months that that child won't be in care.

I had just yesterday an email come in, a single parent. How are they supposed to budget for this? We've brought in \$10-a-day daycare; we've blundered it. There are no spots. It was a great headline for five seconds, until we said, hey by the way, if you force this through we're going to be in trouble. And we are. More examples of this government failing parents and not being addressed in the bill.

If the Sask Party really cared about parents, they would fund our education system so that parents trust their kids are getting the best education. If they really cared about parents, they would

implement living wages for parents. If they cared about parents, they would get involved.

Like none of this, none of this in this bill will change anything. I have an article here about a family on minimum wage. The quote:

I don't think it's enough. I've got a family. I've got kids and grandkids. They depend on me, and working minimum wage for 22 hours a week is not enough.

If the Saskatchewan Party cared about parent-child relationships, they would make sure that parents could afford to put groceries on the table. If they cared, they would make sure that students aren't going to school hungry. This is a travesty unto itself, a debate that we could be . . . another. Let's add it to the list of emergency debates we should be happening instead of targeting 1 per cent of the population, the most vulnerable population we have in Saskatchewan. Let's add students going to school on empty stomachs to the list.

If the government cared about parents and children, they would make sure that their life . . . They'd have access to affordable housing, access to housing for their children. If they really cared about child welfare and the school system, they would invest in those counsellors. They would invest in more school social workers, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the government cared about parents and families, they would bring in cost-of-living relief. They'd slash all those PST increases that hit the lowest earners in our province.

Man, on *The Green Zone* . . . I don't actually listen to this; my mom does. She was telling me, she says, Nathaniel — I don't know if I'm allowed to even use my own name at this point — member from Saskatoon Meewasin. That's how my mom and I talk now because she watches the legislative channel. She's involved. She knows.

She says, member from Saskatoon Meewasin, on *The Green Zone* they were talking about the PST that they put on these Rider tickets, and they were upset that these packages of tickets have PST on them now. And I said, yeah, I'm the critic. I'm your son, the member from Saskatoon Meewasin, also official opposition critic for Parks, Culture and Sport. And I know it's just killing those season ticket holders.

And I hate to make jest because this is a serious issue. Because it is cost, but you know, it just adds that extra cost. And those are just things that people are seeing at the lowest, the lowest incomes. I know we talk a lot about families making so much, you know, levels, but I think we really have to revert. If we really were thinking about parents and kids, we need to look at some of the most vulnerable in our society.

I just feel like under this regime, this government, that these issues are being ignored. Child poverty, record levels. I promise that we as the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party will always fight for a life you can afford, health care when you need it, and good jobs here in the province. That's our commitment to you.

You know, we said, let's get back to work; let's debate education. If you guys want to call us back, we'll do it. Let's debate education. Let's debate their record. We've canvassed that this policy really isn't about education at all. It's not about bringing

people together. It's more a political chess piece.

But I think we should talk about education funding a bit. And I've asked this before: will the use of the notwithstanding clause and implementation of this policy, rolling back the human rights of queer and trans students, ensure our schools are funded? No, it won't. The government has cut per-student funding to the second lowest in Canada. Under the Premier's predecessor, it should be noted, we were leaders.

We have the highest percentage of kids who are learning on an empty stomach. We've talked about that.

Where there's hallway medicine in Saskatchewan, we also have hallway education. Our schools are so cramped that students are learning in the hallways. Classrooms are overcrowded. These are things we could be talking about. There aren't even enough chairs. I talked to a teacher this summer who bought chairs for their classroom out of their own salary because they didn't have enough seats in their overcrowded classroom.

And I'll tell you, this isn't a teacher making a fabled \$91,000. Ten years on the job, not making \$91,000 that that green billboard and those bus ads were telling me over the summer, probably still up. I think — what did it cost? — 100,000-plus dollars, probably still going up. A lot of teachers were like, what is going on here?

But yeah, bought the chairs out of their own pocket. Not making 91,000. Not too impressed by the government's three-year plan for increases. But maybe they could buy some chairs for the parents who are going to have to come sit in the classrooms because they aren't really, like, providing enough chairs now. I mean, maybe like we've seen in Quebec, like I said, maybe the parents can come and like work in the classrooms so they can be connected.

And desks. Let's buy more desks. There's not even enough desks. Some classrooms have 35 kids.

Could you imagine when you were a student if your band room was shuttered or your art room or your music room? That's what's happening. I've talked about teacher-librarians. I could talk all day about teacher-librarians, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I've got a song in my heart about that, but I think we'll get off topic if I do.

I just have to ask, you know, how is outing queer and trans kids going to make a child's classroom a more brighter place? It's just another policy being saddled on educators, educators who are burning out, who are under supported.

I'm going to speak about teachers for a bit here, teachers who have seen support slashed. You know, there are less EAs than there ever were before, EAs working to a breaking point on wages that do not accurately reflect the hard work that they do. Like I said, we've got a government who is slandering teachers with taxpayer-funded billboards during contract negotiations. It's just shameful.

Teachers are seeing unprecedented levels of violence in the classroom, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But again, we've been told that this isn't something that they want to negotiate at the negotiation

table. Not interested. They don't claim it's a very serious issue. One-third of the STF members have experienced violence in the classroom. They're seeing complexities skyrocket. But it's just kind of a symptom of conservative governments across the country, that we're just seeing this undervalue of education.

And I talked about the teacher who basically told me that with implementation of this policy — and my colleague also mentioned — that she's just saying, don't ask, don't tell. She's not a safe individual anymore. She's got a classroom of 40-plus kids, and it's not looking bright.

This is what this policy will not solve. It's not going to address the concerns that teachers have. It's not going to address the concerns that kids in our classrooms have. It's certainly not addressing the concerns that parents have. In fact I think it's just disrespecting all those groups. It won't help parents connect with their kids.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to move on to a section I've entitled, government overreach, government overreach and the notwithstanding clause. You know I've spoken at great length about the irreparable harm this policy is going to inflict on queer and trans kids. I've spoken about parental inclusion in our education system. I've spoken about teachers. We've canvassed the child advocate. We've talked. We've heard the letter of the former Human Rights Commissioner that resigned. We've referenced the judiciary's request for a pause on this policy, that this government called judicial overreach.

But what really has kind of surprised me in this whole conversation is that, how can this government ever point the finger and say, government overreach? Because this is what they claim is happening from the feds all the . . . Sorry, they can claim judicial overreach. But they are saying that the feds are constantly . . . You know, pointing the finger at them — government overreach, government overreach, government overreach. And then we have a premier who comes out and says, well this is judicial overreach, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I just find it just a bit odd that you can't consider, by using the notwithstanding clause to roll back the rights of kids, that you don't see that as government overreach. And it's like every . . . We've talked about all the organizations that have come out swinging at this. There's also a couple other organizations who've come out swinging. We've actually had a couple of international articles written about this issue.

You know, it seems every time Saskatchewan makes international headlines these days, it's for some gaff by this provincial government. I mean we reached international headlines for inviting a convicted wife-beating murderer to this Legislative Assembly. And now we're making international headlines with quotes like, "Scott Moe is taking on trans kids." Let's find the . . . I had the quote here. I'll find it. It's just, it's just baffling to me.

Here's what the Canadian Bar Association has expressed. I'll quote their statement:

The Canadian Bar Association is deeply concerned by the announcement made yesterday by Premier Scott Moe regarding the invocation of the notwithstanding clause to

override a judge's decision to pause the implementation of the parental inclusion policy.

In a 56-page decision, the Court of King's Bench Justice Michael Megaw wrote, "I find this to be one of those clear cases where injunctive relief is necessary to attempt to prevent the irreparable harm referred to pending a full hearing on this matter."

Fostering safe and inclusive environments for two-spirit, trans, nonbinary, and gender-diverse students in school allows students to live authentically in a public setting where their gender identity is affirmed. Efforts to curtail the rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth to live openly and authentically are profoundly harmful, and the use of the clause to discriminate against or oppress marginalized persons or groups or to discriminate on the basis of gender is inconsistent with the values articulated in the Charter. Democracy is a pluralistic society and more than majority rule. It involves the recognition and protection of minorities, especially the vulnerable among us.

The CBA, the Canadian Bar Association, also want to reiterate that each branch of government has its mandate, and the legitimate judicial role is an essential part of democracy. The role of protecting the rights and freedoms from government overreach under our system of government falls to the courts. Statements that cast doubt on the independence and the role of the judiciary erode the public's trust in the legal system and our democratic institutions.

I just wanted to bring that statement. I'm hoping I'm making this argument as clear as possible. I just think there is such irony in a government that claims government overreach, government overreach, government overreach constantly, and then when something doesn't go in their favour, judicial overreach.

[15:30]

I think every time you point, you've got three fingers pointing right back at you. I just . . . That's the irony I find in this whole situation. And I just think it's just so startling to hear that the government would choose this path. And again more organizations are coming out and saying, no, you've got this wrong; pause it; respect the judiciary; respect that arm of government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to move on here to some thoughts I had around consultation on this policy, because I think it is really important to canvass the consultation. And what we saw from the court documents proceeding is that this policy was developed again with zero consultation with parents, school divisions, teachers, community-based organizations, queer or trans advocates. None of these people were consulted. We know this policy was developed in eight days. The Premier and Minister of Health admitted that they can't point to a single person who was surprised that their child was using a different name or pronoun. This government and Premier have ignored parents . . .

Apologies. We know from court documents as well that this policy was developed off of 18 letters, seven of which identified

as parents. The Premier has ignored parents and failed students. Our schools are falling apart and our classrooms are underfunded. These aren't the priorities of parents. This policy is the priority of the Sask Party.

Let's look at a little bit of polling here. So when this policy came out, the Premier noted on social media that in a survey from July done by Angus Reid — so this was a couple months; the policy came out August 22nd, this poll was done in July — that a majority of parents supported his policies. Now the questions were a bit slanted, I'd say, but that's from July. This is also a government that said, at the height of the pandemic, they would never govern on polls. So again another just little bit of irony. We've got government overreach. We've got judicial overreach. We've got, "I don't govern by polls. Well here's a poll that supports what I'm doing."

But I think that since we're going to come back to polls, you know, I think it's important to look at some of the recent polling on this situation. And I've got a press release here from Egale Canada. I'm going to go through some of the points here. I'm not going to read the whole thing.

But some of the data released is showing spark*insights showing — this is polling commissioned by Egale Canada, done by spark*insights — show that 68 per cent of Saskatchewanians and 73 per cent of Canadians would prefer that the Saskatchewan Party government let the courts review this policy before rushing to overrule it. The new data from spark*insights says that 59 per cent of people in Saskatchewan believe that the school pronoun could lead to children being harmed. That's nearly 60 per cent of people in Saskatchewan believe that when this policy is implemented, it will cause harm.

This data also shows that 66 per cent of Saskatchewanians support teacher discretion when informing parents on child's names and pronouns. We see the majority of Saskatchewan residents disagreeing with these policies. There is no majority. New data released today by spark*insights following polling commissioned by Egale Canada shows that 59 per cent of Saskatchewanians believe children are likely to be harmed. Only 45 per cent of Saskatchewanians support the government's position of requiring parents to be informed.

Egale notes itself as a leading organization for 2SLGBTQI [two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning, intersex] people and issues. Egale is sounding the alarm and urging the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately halt their plans. Pause the plans. That's all we've asked for. Pause the plans. Let's review. Let's let the courts do their job.

After polling I thought it would be good to, you know, at least help the government a little bit, bring some expert opinions forward. And I also wanted to speak a little bit about some of the myths that are flying around in regards to this policy. For any policy to be effective, Mr. Deputy Speaker, expert insights are invaluable. We know this. It really does appear that our judicial system did more research, more stakeholder engagement through the process than the Ministry of Education.

So what I wanted to do was address some of the misconceptions that are circulating as it pertains to gender-affirming care,

because I think one of the things that we find is that there is this kind of fear of the unknown. And unfortunately we're seeing a government that is willing to stoke those embers. And I think one of the biggest myths that we're seeing right now being circulated online and in our communities is a misunderstanding of gender-affirming care. There are myths going around about this discussion of pronouns and names.

So I wanted to bring some information from a primary care physician and what they are saying about myths on gender-affirming care. And in an attempt, just so that I can cite my sources, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I got this information from a conversation between Leisha Grebinski and a primary care physician that came on her show on CBC morning.

So this fall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of course I attended a number of parental rights advocates demonstrations. I'm going to call them demonstrations because I don't think that protests . . . I feel like I was protesting in that situation so we'll call them demonstrations. And you go to these demonstrations and there are signs that say, hands off our children's body; stop pushing gender confusion; we want education not sex classes.

Speaking a little bit to the notion that there is some misconception that teachers, because they're building open and inclusive environments free of homophobia, transphobia, racism, Islamophobia, ableism, misogyny, that teachers by creating those safe environments are in some way advocating for students to take up the 2SLGBTQ [two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning] lifestyle. I'm handing out pamphlets on the side of the road. I've been rubbing it off on my seatmate here. Very gay now. It's contagious.

So I wanted to go into this a bit. It was really, really shocking to me. Maybe not shocking, but I think it's upsetting to see these myths being spread and that a government with its power . . . And of all of the power it has to communicate to the people of this province to take the higher road, not go down the path of the dark side by stoking the embers of transphobia and misunderstanding. They could be using, say for example, the Minister of Health could be out dispelling myth and rumours. Wouldn't that be something, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Using the power of government.

They can spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on an ad claiming that teachers make \$91,000, but they can't spend a dollar on confronting myth and misunderstanding in our province. Instead they are pandering. They are stirring the embers of those myths with this policy.

So I thought, as we stand in this Chamber here, I wanted to talk a bit about this. I think it's important that we address these myths. I wish that we could have experts come and do presentations to us here. I wish this primary care physician could come and stand here on the floor of the legislature and tell us all about this. I wish that we would invite them to the committee proceedings, but I seem to remember the last time we attempted to bring experts to a committee proceeding we were denied. I wish I could invite this primary care physician to the committee. I mean of course we are rushing this through. Maybe they won't be able to make it because the time frame is so short, but it would be great to hear from them. I'll come back to this.

So what is gender-affirming care? It's a broad term, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It starts with simply respecting who people say they are when they tell us who they say they are, or who they are. When they tell us who they are, we accept that. That's number one. Gender-affirming care. Respecting that. Affirming individuals. Specifically what this legislation wants teachers not to do without consent. It can be as simple as respecting the use of pronouns and names requested.

Now physicians and medical professionals who administer gender-affirming care also offer social supports to folks who come to see them. These physicians and clinicians are trained and can prescribe hormones. The biggest myth and falsehood that we are seeing circulated about gender-affirming care is that children are being rushed into irreversible surgeries. We've all seen it. It's simply not true.

There is so much emotion around this conversation. We as a society are primed to be looking after the well-being of the most vulnerable in our society. That's so important. I wish that we could be doing that a bit more in this Chamber. That's what are our values. It's also, like I said, the core values of our province: in many peoples, strength.

So I think that it's important to address the myth that children are accessing irreversible surgeries. It's simply not true, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is no rush. There is no evidence of children under the age of 18 being coerced into surgeries before 18. Absolutely nothing. Frankly there are absolutely — and I don't know how many ways I can say this — there are no surgeries happening for children under the age of 18. It's against international law, Mr. Deputy Speaker, international law that we all sign onto as democracies. First number one myth dispelled.

What the primary care physicians who deal with gender-affirming care really want us to know is that there is no rush in the process. Gender-affirming care can look . . . What gender-affirming care can look like for individuals under 18, what we do sometimes see for youth under 18 is that they will receive completely reversible, at any time, hormone therapy.

And again statistics are showing that a majority of folks who are using hormone therapy are adults or very late adolescents. Very, very, very few — statistically low — children under the age of 16 are seeing the use of hormone therapy. When very young people express gender dysphoria, clinicians are never offering anything that is going to result in irreversible changes to the person.

They may receive medications that have been used for decades to pause puberty, for example, which any child who might be experiencing puberty early might access. These are medications that have been used for decades. They may be using this for a few years, for short periods of time, but again none of these medications are irreversible. They lead to no lasting impact.

It's so important to note because it just seems like this is the kind of myth that seems to be going around so much. This is what the primary care physicians are saying. If hormone therapy is in the cards, it's started into late adolescence, very close to adulthood.

It's important to note that transition is a very slow process. Even when someone starts, it's very slow. It can take months for any

changes to appear and years before a transition is complete. In that process, there is blood work, appointments, and conversations with their physician. At any point in the process there is a chance to stop, which is very rare.

What is noted is that when we have seen detransition, it's usually because the social supports that that person found have disappeared. A lot of times — when they've left school, safe environments, enter into a workforce, maybe they don't have the family support — that's when you see it, when social supports evaporate.

And as I said, at any point in the process, there's a chance to stop. Primary care physicians are clear. Supporting kids is crucial during their process to determining their identity. It is crucial for their mental health and crucial for their physical safety.

[15:45]

Schools are supporting students with inclusive environments and we are simply asking for people to treat trans people with kindness and humanity that they deserve, the same humanity that you would want to be treated with in any health-related situation or social situation, no matter your background.

The myth that teachers are forcing ideology on students is simply untrue. We must challenge this. Each and every one of us in this room must challenge these myths. I have educated you now. Go forward and challenge these myths.

If there are children questioning their own identity and they are in a safe classroom or school environment with people around them who will be supportive, they will be safer and they will live longer. So we can be very clear: no child is receiving irreversible care when it comes to gender dysphoria. We are so clear about this.

Another expert organization that I met with when this policy was announced was Saskatoon Sexual Health. I met with my colleague, the member from Saskatoon University, and I spoke at length with the executive director and many of the folks involved about the importance of sex ed in schools but also about the myths being spread about queer and trans people, primarily the myth that there are more queer people now than ever before. There were never this many queer people in my day or back in the day or ever; it just seems like they're popping out of the ground.

First let me tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there have always been queer and trans people in our midst. But when we really look at the statistics and the facts, it's really only been 30 years that queer people have been able to legally exist, that having a relationship wasn't going to be criminalized. Thirty years — that's only how long it's been. For 30 years it's been legal, legal to be gay, and it's only been legal that queer people can marry someone of their choosing for 10 years. Like it's such a short period of time when you think about it. And someone who's visiting a convention this fall will be voting . . . voted against same-sex marriage. Maybe you could ask him about it when you see him.

As I've said this in this Chamber, you know, I am the first openly gay person elected to this Chamber. Because, you know, queer

and trans people have always existed. There have been queer and trans people in this room before. There will be more.

Kind of along this line of debunking this myth that there's just way more queer and trans people now than there ever were before, another reason that we are seeing more is that there's more ability to know oneself. There's more information out there. Back in the day there was so little information, no access to education, prejudice from religious groups. People have been left without the knowledge to know themselves for so long.

And I wanted to share one of the really impactful letters that I received on this because it really speaks to this. This is an anonymous letter from a trans individual in Saskatchewan who wanted me to keep their name anonymous:

In elementary school I wish I had a safe space to learn about others like me and have a place where I felt safe to discover myself, somewhere I could to some small extent be me. I wish I had much broader gender identity and sexual orientation education through school than I was exposed to. I wish I had the words to express what I was experiencing. I wish I wasn't terrified that someone might find out how different I am. I wish I felt like I could participate in society as my true self. I wish I knew I could be accepted by society if I expressed myself the way my experiences said I should.

From age 4 to 49 years of age, I wish I knew what it meant to be trans. I wish I knew that I could be unapologetically proud to be trans. I wish I knew it was normal to not be normal. Instead I was ashamed and scared. I relentlessly and efficiently repressed memories and any experience that may have suggested I was fighting an internal battle of gender identity. I repressed ignored memories and experiences just so I could fit myself into that societal and familiar mould I was expected to fit in.

I repressed these experiences so efficiently at times that I didn't even realize I was doing so. In doing so I accumulated nearly five decades of repression and trauma and bouts of often undiagnosed depression. I felt alone on an island, that I would be ostracized if I let the truth slip. It wasn't until I approached my 50s that I started confronting these memories and experiences and allowing them space in my consciousness. Many of these repressed experiences go back as far as I can remember to when I was four or five years of age, five decades of repression and self-hate.

My best life has occurred after October 2020 when I accepted that I was a transgender woman and subsequently started living my truth. The support and love that I could have received from our community is supportive beyond anything I could have imagined

It's a much different time than it was in the '70s. This policy is regressive and one that makes me think we are turning to the mid-'70s when I attended public school, one that currently I would never have expected in Saskatchewan or anywhere else in Canada.

Furthermore if you already guide your kids, facilitate an open, safe, and honest line of communication for them, encourage them to grow and experience life, and provide

them a safe space, you don't need made-up dog whistle rights to raise them the way you see fit. I hope we can do better for Saskatchewan's 2SLGBTQI+ youth.

End of letter.

This was just really such an impactful letter. And again I just have to say thank you so much to everyone who submitted these experiences, submitted these letters. I think that it is just powerful to have voices who will be affected by this, have the ability for them to speak out and have their voices heard in this legislature.

Thankfully nowadays there really are so many more resources for folks to learn about their authentic selves. And you know, representation is important. It's still catching up but, you know, it is certainly leagues ahead of even when I was in high school 15 years ago.

Lastly we discussed, at Saskatoon Sexual Health, we discussed another myth, one that's going around — transgender regret. Many folks point to this myth that transgender people will decide later on in life that they are not transgender.

And on this the statistics don't lie. Transgender regret is statistically not existent, sitting at 0.7 per cent. The number of trans people who have detransitioned is statistically insignificant. This is on similar lines of surgical regrets, so surgical regrets such as I regret my knee replacement. That's how low this is on the statistics. I mean who regrets their knee replacement?

Often, more often than not, folks who might stop transitioning or detransition cite a total lack of support in their communities. They cite no longer feeling safe. Many cite how they had felt so safe and supported in schools but they see those supports melt away when they exit the school systems. It's such a powerful testament to the safety of school environments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've canvassed a lot of the topics that I wanted to discuss today, but in the vein of consultation I put out a call on social media for impact statements as to how this legislation would affect members of the queer community, members of the trans community, parents of queer and trans people, allies of this community.

And so as we learned earlier that this policy was developed using 18 letters, 7 of whom were from parents, I would like to read into the record 18 letters, 7 of which are from parents. I'm going to start with the seven from parents. I've got a lot of packages of 18 letters, 7 of which are parents.

To whom it may concern: I would like to introduce myself. I'm a 48-year-old mother of three and a long-time employee of the Saskatchewan school division. I work directly with the children, children whose rights are being ignored. I work in an elementary school and quite literally with them side by side daily. I know these children well and sometimes I'm afraid I know more about them than their parents do. The question is why; why do they put their trust in me? Quite honestly because I am safe. I listen and love without judgment, and many kids do not have this at home.

I could tell countless stories of kids letting me in on inner thoughts and moments they do not feel safe sharing. Some

would absolutely knock you off your feet in terror. Some would bring you to tears. Some would make you laugh until you cried.

Today I want to tell you about two special humans — a small girl who started her life as a boy. They started school as a boy and had friends and life as a boy but were loved and trusted and honoured at home enough to transition while in elementary school. They grew their hair out, changed their clothing, took on a new name, and let me tell you, they thrived. This girl came into herself and was glowing.

Now how did the kids at school react? This is a common concern. The kids did not care. They used her new name. They complimented her curls and painted nails and played on the playground together. The issue occurred when this girl's best friend in class of three years' parents found out. They found out that the girl they had been inviting to parties and play dates had been born a child, had been born a boy.

Suddenly they forced the friendship to end. They ostracized the girl. They demanded their child be separated from their best friend. This is where the trauma comes from. That is where the tears and self-doubt and dark thoughts come from. That is where hate starts and festers.

The second child is an older child but still in elementary school, still under the age of 16. They are not allowed to show who they are. They come to school with self-harm scars and write dark, scary stories. They self-isolate. They hide themselves. They shave their head and start avoiding school and friends. They attempt suicide.

Luckily I have the absolute privilege to be in this child's class. Slowly but surely we begin to make a connection. We stop with the academic expectations and we focus on relationships and belonging. We meet them where they are at.

Before the school year ends, this child starts to change. They start to grow their hair again, show up in school. They no longer have fresh cuts and wounds. They start to connect. They connect with me among others, a silly lady who wears bright colours, has strange hair, and always has a rainbow pin on her lanyard that says, "You are safe with me."

Near the end of the school year, this kid who everyone was concerned about comes to school with a smile and says, "Thank you, Ms. Blank. Because you wear your pin every day, I know I can be myself." They tell me their biggest secret, and together we begin to navigate this scary world.

I will spare you the details but will leave you with this: that year this child was brave enough to ask for a Pride shirt for their birthday, and they got one. They proudly wore it to school after that.

Now in story one, the moment our friend was outed without their consent, they were alienated and traumatized by a best friend and the friend's entire family. In story two, we have a child who was close to a very dark life find a glimmer of hope to hold onto. There is no guarantee either story will end well. I hope they do. What I can guarantee, 100 per cent

guarantee, is kids who are respected and trusted for who they are have a better chance in this world.

Forcing schools to out children is not only disgusting but is a direct threat to the child. Parents have parental rights and yes, those are incredibly important, but they do not trump the personal human rights of the child.

Letter one from parents. The next one, this one is from . . . Oh, I read this one from Heather Kuttai already today. This was her submission. Letter two from parents, as I've already read it into the record.

[16:00]

Letter three:

Dear members of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly:

I'm a parent and a teacher. I would like just to add my voice to those citizens that vehemently disagree with the government's heavy-handed, regressive, and bigoted new education policies, implemented without consulting any experts. This whole parental rights movement has nothing to do with a parent's rights and everything to do with undermining public education and sowing distrust in teachers during this round of bargaining. It's also obvious that you are pandering to the religious right to secure votes from the Sask United Party.

In the process, you have put some of the most vulnerable students at risk. Adults have always had rights and an element of control over children as one who provide their food, shelter, and other necessities. They're full-grown people. Kids are the ones who we need to protect and you've effectively taken their protections away, for not only queer kids, as all children's rights are no longer intact. The policy contravenes the Canadian Charter and the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. I will repeat these words again. Your policy contravenes the Canadian Charter and the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.

We as Canadians have learned to do better. We have learned to be better people who accept and include everyone and respect the rights of children. Look at history and what has happened when we start to exclude and dehumanize. It doesn't end well. Your policies were implemented without any expert consultation. You can do better. It's time to find your moral compass in the right way. You are on the wrong side of history.

Additionally, you have undermined the professionalism of teachers who have always involved families in their children's schooling. In fact, as the Premier mentioned, admitted on a CBC radio last week, you have no evidence that this has ever been an issue, yet are stubbornly using the notwithstanding clause to strip the human rights of Saskatchewan people.

What's next? Ask yourself that, because it's an important question. Your decision will have long-lasting consequences on our province, how people perceive us, and your ability to remain in government. It is not too late to

change your minds and do the right thing by striking this policy down.

As a parent I would hope that my kids would speak with me about their desire to change their name or pronouns if they felt so inclined to, but I would also be happy to know they had a trusted person in their lives they felt comfortable enough to tell. I can't imagine that coming out to family would be easy, and there is less at stake in telling a trusted teacher at school.

Speaking as a teacher, the policy irreparably harms the relationship between teachers and students. You have built a wall, which is so unfortunate when a lot of kids really do view school as a safe place. It may be hard for some people to imagine if they have a more privileged upbringing, but not every family is loving and supportive. I know the government has suggested wraparound supports are available, but you know this is untrue because of your cuts to education.

I would like to speak to that point that there is at least one person trained in mental health first aid. It's one teacher per school who participated in a 12-hour-long course. Are these the supports that are meant to be in place to support students and families? I'm confused. Do you realize that teachers are already overworked and that we are not trained social workers or counsellors, with the exception of a few guidance counsellors in schools lucky enough to have them? I'm not sure how that one teacher per school is supposed to be pulled out of their classroom and suddenly respond to kids in crisis. How about hiring some real mental health professionals, health nurses, social workers, and counsellors throughout the province to support students?

To sum this up, this policy needs to be scrapped. Using the notwithstanding clause to strip human rights is inexcusable.

Sincerely,
Trudy Keil, teacher, parent, queer ally.

All right. Number four:

Hello and thank you for being present for the people. You may read the following in the legislature on October 10th, please and thanks.

My name is Steph. I am queer woman, a parent, and a therapist. I am more than just these things even though they are all very important aspects of who I am and I how experience life in this society. But I will be sharing these three parts of myself and my experiences and how the Sask Party's recent policies impact me, my family, and will likely harm our fellow community members and neighbours.

As a queer person, I am hurt watching my two-spirit, trans, and nonbinary friends, peers, and family members being targeted by so much hate. This pronoun policy is forcing two-spirit, trans, and nonbinary youth to out themselves before they are ready and sometimes even to people who might not be supportive, who may be abusive. This is horrifying.

I remember almost 20 years ago when I came out as being queer to my friends and family. I was so scared about judgment. I felt insecure. I was scared. And I was doing it on my own terms. Doing something scary is hard, but being able to do it on my own terms made it empowering instead of something potentially traumatic. It was still hard though. I had questions. I was questioned about the legitimacy of my sexuality. I was sexualized by others. I was told to keep it under wraps in certain environments.

But being out and open about who I am posed a risk to my well-being, to my connections to community, to financial security through employment. And this was two decades ago. It pains me to be here as we move forward in time and backward in inclusive practices and policies. The work that's been done to uphold the rights of 2SLGBTQ+ folks has been heavy and we will continue to show up for the fight as long we have.

As a parent, I find myself telling folks over and over that my kiddo is one of my most influential teachers. This child, who is not even seven years old yet, has taught me more lessons than I can recite. One of the lessons that stands out to me is realizing how much we can trust our kids to know about what they need and know who they are.

Our kids are not yet as affected by the world around us, by media, social media, by familial patterns, by societal standards and norms, by world events. They know themselves without the filter of society, without stigma and without biases. Granted, they are still growing so much. Developmentally we know that the mind and body continue to mature into the mid-20s before we are out of our adolescence. Nonetheless, no one is more certain of themselves as a four-year-old.

I have learned that it is not my job to teach my child about themselves. It's my job to make space for them to figure that out and to teach them how to communicate who they are so they can teach me all about them. It's not my job to show them unconditional love and respect, to help them feel safe to be who they are.

As a parent I have some rights, sure, and I do not feel like those are being compromised in any way. As a parent I also have a lot of responsibility, and I'm not hearing the Premier talk much about the justification of this policy. I'm responsible for my child's well-being, to provide them with nourishment they need to grow in body, mind, heart, and spirit.

Two-spirit and trans and queer youth who are not safe at home need safe spaces and school should continue to be that safe space. This policy that requires parental condition for teachers and school personnel to use proper names and pronouns for a young person puts young people at risk of being deadnamed at school and outed to parents who may not be supportive or may even be abusive.

This policy overlooks our collective responsibility to protect young people. Professionally, I am a social worker. I have worked in this field for 20 years. I have met so many 2S, queer, and trans folks through my work. Each and every

person I have met is always the best experts on their own lives. People know themselves, queer or not. We can trust that. Through my work as a social worker, I have become very familiar with my professional responsibility to protect children and youth.

I wonder if the Premier of this province is familiar with legislation that his party updated in 2019. The *Saskatchewan Child Abuse Protocol* is a document that is for all community members in recognition of our need to protect, respond, and provide a voice for all children. It states that it applies to every citizen in this province and is backed by *The Child and Family Services Act*. The SK child abuse protocol defines emotionless treatment as both emotional abuse and emotional neglect of the child.

Emotional abuse includes excessive and overt rejection, criticism, and excessive demands of performance for a child's age and ability. Emotional neglect refers to the failure of a parent or caregiver to provide adequate, psychological nurturance necessary for a child's growth and development. I'm curious how the Premier proposes to balance our collective duty to protect a child, a responsibility that supersedes parental rights.

It's not only this pronoun policy that I'm also concerned about. It is also the decision to allow parents to opt out their kids out of sex ed, the third-party presentations that touch on the topic of sex. I'm concerned about the serious gaps and the rationale on these policies. We were told it was to protect children, yet programs that are aimed at reducing child abuse, programs put on by third-party organizations that are of local experts on responding to and advocating for the prevention of child abuse, are being shut down.

As a therapist I find myself saying something along the lines, you don't know what you don't know until you know it. I want to emphasize this point as we are looking at this legislation. How can we make sure parents are making an informed decision based on factual, critically analyzed information rather than basing their opinions on information they may not even realize that they don't know.

According to the child abuse policy, emotional neglect refers to the failure of a parent or caregiver to provide adequate psychological nurturance necessary for a child's growth and development. I would argue that psychoeducation about sexual health, sexual development and consent, and sexual abuse prevention is important psychological nurturing for young people.

I doubt most parents are intentionally withholding important information from youth about things that will help them reduce the risk of harm against things in the province that has the highest rates of HIV and syphilis and the highest rates of gender-based violence and interpersonal violence. They are potential if they are to opt out.

I have said a lot here, so to sum up I want to emphasize how much these policies that the Premier and the Sask Party are trying to implement are more harmful to children than they are . . . more harmful to children, and oppose these policies. Thank you.

This is a really powerful one from a parent again:

If the pronoun policy had come out 10 years ago, I probably would have supported it. But that was before my 17-year-old daughter told my husband and I that she was transgender. She had known about it for about a year but did not share this information with us as we were not a safe space to her, something that I will always regret.

At that time we belonged to a faith community that believed that the 2SLGBTQ+ people were sinful. And because I was raised in this community, I was terrified what would happen if my children were gay. I worked with people who are gay but I didn't really approve of the way they lived. Because these views were held, my daughter was scared to tell us she was transgender, but I am sure there were people in her high school who knew. Her doctor and psychiatrist knew before my husband and I did. She was becoming more depressed and beginning to self-harm. Finally she decided that she'd rather be homeless than keep trying to pretend she was someone that she wasn't.

My husband and I were shocked, but we didn't kick out our daughter. With even more regret, we made her hold off her transition until she graduated. We said it was due to the rural high school she attended, but it was also in fear of what people would say. We did a lot of learning over the next couple years, and while I wish I had done so many things differently, now that I know better we would do better.

After arguments with our church about whether our daughter could still receive communion, we stopped going. We accept and support our daughter 100 per cent and the entire 2SLGBTQ+ community. Our daughter is very happy and thriving. Had we put our church before her, the outcome could have been completely different.

The pronoun policy isn't about parental rights. It's about parental authority for parents from faith communities who are told that being gay and transgender is an abomination. They feel that if they can keep their children from learning about queer people at school they won't choose to be gay or transgender, as they believe it's a choice.

Well my daughter didn't learn about transgender people in school and was raised in a church but was transgender anyway. There is no way she would choose to go through the discrimination and hate directed at transgender people if there were no other choice.

This policy will be extremely harmful for children under 16 with parents like I was and the ones I knew from my faith community. Not all will put their children first. Not every child will choose to keep living when their acceptance is denied.

[16:15]

Good evening. My name is Elsie and I'm a mother of three daughters, age five, seven, and nine, and I live in the Saskatoon Meewasin district.

I am writing to express my extreme concern over the

measures that the Sask Party is taking to deny children 16 and under the right to safe self-expression and the freedom of who they feel that they are. I know that if any of my kids wanted to go by another name, I'd be supportive, and that it's not true for every kid. By not allowing these kids who don't feel comfortable talking to their parents about their identity to identify by their chosen name and gender identity at school without parental consent, we are removing school supports from kids who clearly already don't have home supports.

Parents don't have any right to decide who their kids are. We have responsibilities to care, protect, and love those kids, but absolutely no right to decide who they become. This isn't about maintaining parent rights; this is about removing a child's rights. It's about the Sask Party pandering to a conservative demographic and playing politics instead of properly governing the province. I am outraged.

Please, please, please, continue to fight on this. Lives are literally at stake. Our children are growing up in a province where public education and health care are being slashed by the government at every opportunity, but now they're not even safe to be who they are when they want to be at school. This is beyond unfair, unacceptable. Our kids deserve better. Our kids deserve freedom to be who they want. Please keep up the fight.

Sincerely,
Elsie Hartnett

I'm going to read the last seven parental letters here:

When my son, who is trans, was in grade 8, he started to use his name Terrance as part of his transitioning journey. His teacher was integral to this and was incredibly supportive at introducing this into the classroom. We as parents did know about this, and Terry knew we were supportive, but I am so glad his teacher did not have to spend any time or energy informing us of this. I would rather that it be spent on supporting my child.

And while we are in support of Terry, he has other friends who are not out at home and are unsafe to do so. This bill does nothing to help LGBTQ+ who are not able to have this conversation with their families and will put them at risk for more harm. The potential risks to the population of kids far outweighs the benefits to families who are already connected and having these conversations. It also ignores the fact that factual education on sexual information or LGBTQ+ will not be provided by those families to their children.

So those are my first seven letters from parents. I will continue on in my package of 18 letters.

I write a testimonial regarding . . .

Sorry, I'll preface this letter now. I've done seven parents. I'm now going to move into the rest of the letters. This one is from a student who wished to remain anonymous and she is in grade 9.

I write a testimonial regarding the new policy regarding parent permission for teachers to use preferred names and pronouns at school. You are our government. We live in a democratic political system. The word “democracy” comes from the Greek word “demos,” meaning people, and “kratos,” meaning power. So democracy can be thought of power of the people, a way of governing which depends on the will of the people.

When you are talking about trans and LGBTQ+ rights, it’s not only a matter of your opinion. We all have opinions and experiences, and yours are just as valid as mine. The effects go beyond you because — correct me if I’m wrong — you haven’t heard your best friend cry because her whole class spoke to how we got what we deserve in the face of the history of oppression.

You haven’t seen your trans friends lose all hope for life because no matter how many times they speak out, nobody respects them for who they are. Then you see them smile in the one safe space it seemed like we had — school.

When for some it’s a choice, it’s a choice between having a roof over your head or being yourself. We read articles every day about new laws passed in the States and then here. Most people can live with themselves every day and realize what a difference it makes to trans folk if in one place you can feel validated. If for a few hours someone can be who they are through all the hate, there is something to hold on to. When laws like this get passed, it’s showing young people and the world that being LGBTQ+ is wrong. So no, you will never know what it’s like to see the rates of suicide.

This path of hate we find ourselves in, history repeats itself. An eye for an eye until the whole world is blind. Not just with LGBTQ rights but with Indigenous rights, Black rights, disabled rights, justice for everyone. And I’m tired of my whole life being about how I’m gay, being I am. Because I am more than just a label.

We don’t have to agree but we have to treat each other as people. And when will our so-called democracy stop being about money and start being about people? Or do you actually care about the youth of tomorrow — all youth, or only the youth that look like you and talk like you and act like you? So if you will call this a democracy, then listen to the people, because the people have spoken.

With hope for change,
Olive, grade 9 student

Wow. That’s just so impactful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Just amazing to hear the voices of folks, the youth speaking out, the youth that don’t really have a vote. They can’t choose their representatives. We have to do better for them.

This next letter is anonymous:

At 12 years old my father asked me to speak to him alone in the garage. He said, “So you think you’re gay.” My brain was immediately flooded with all the ways he could have found out. However one week prior I had spoken with my school counsellor about accepting myself. The first thing out

of my mouth was, “Did the school counsellor tell you?”

“That doesn’t matter,” he replied. “I love you just the same, but I think you’re a little too young to know that.”

It wasn’t until four years later he finally told my brother that he had gone on my phone, read text messages from a friend I was confiding with. I felt utterly betrayed and isolated for those four years. Wasn’t the school counsellor supposed to be someone you could confide in, trust in?

This experience stunted my ability to reach out for help when I needed it the most. It made me feel that the only people I could genuinely depend on were my real and online friends, who were too young in life and experience to offer advice or support worthy of this great terror every queer person is forced to deal with by society — the terror of coming out. The terror of being found out before you’re ready. The vulnerability of being seen.

The rules and regulations the Premier has . . . [inaudible] . . . and introduced will undoubtedly leave gender-diverse kids who need places to feel safe and seen by their peers feeling the same way I felt — betrayed and isolated, fearful of reaching out for help to anyone who actually can.

I have two questions. First, when my young friends weren’t equipped, if my parents weren’t accepting, and the school system was dead set on telling my parents, who should I have spoken to? Second, will you stop at outing transgender kids, or should all kids worry about it too?

[And that’s]

Regards,
Anonymous

This is a letter from a resident of Swift Current.

Good afternoon.

When I was 10 and my sense of self was developing, I noticed something was amiss. I was distressed, and this worsened as I went through puberty. It wasn’t until high school that I learned what transgender meant, and it all just clicked. Just knowing what was happening helped ease some of my struggle but as I looked out at the world and saw how transgender people are treated, my inner turmoil was replaced by fear of my peers, family, and future. What would this mean for me, and would I be accepted and safe?

Many times I thought I should simply kill myself and that would solve all my problems and I wouldn’t be a burden on my loved ones any longer. They could tell something was wrong but I wasn’t ready to talk to them about it. The unfortunate reality is that a lot of trans children are disowned by their families when they come out, even by families that seemed loving until that point. In many ways, suicide seems like the only option. I had no examples to look at of trans people having happy futures. I didn’t even know there were options for me medically.

The reason I’m here today is that a teacher at my high school

listened to me without judgment. She gave me the freedom to try changing my name and pronoun at school without outing me to my parents. She kept me alive long enough for me to be ready to come out to my parents on my terms, with a backup plan in place in case it didn't go well. I knew who I could call to take me to a youth shelter if things went badly. Most importantly, she gave me the sense that I had a future, a bright one even, and that I should be around to see it.

This was around 2011, not a new concept. My parents did not begrudge this teacher for keeping secrets from them and they see it for what it was, a trustworthy adult creating a safe environment at school for a student to thrive and grow. We are all so thankful to this teacher and school and a system that allowed me to thrive.

One element of this policy that I believe is wise, in part, wherein students over 16 are now allowed to change their name and pronouns within the school system without parental approval. By stating this clearly, it clears the grey area and empowers schools to start supporting students, as the legal age to change your name and pronouns in Saskatchewan is 18. So without having a policy that specifies that students are allowed to do so within school, administrators may default to 18-plus.

However, I believe this age should be younger. If I had known what transgender meant when I was 10, changing my name and pronouns then or earlier would have greatly reduced the distress. I know there are trans children who understand themselves even younger than that, and I believe they should be allowed to live honestly and safely within schools. Perhaps looking at the mature minor model here is the best approach.

As well I take issue with the exclusion of Planned Parenthood and other external educators from our schools. It is not reasonable to expect the curriculum to stay up to date with ever-developing health matters, and students deserve to have current information as much as possible. I believe that by supplementing our curriculum with up-to-date external education programs, we can provide students with the best chances at being properly informed.

Every student deserves a safe and inclusive environment that respects their rights and dignity. I'm deeply concerned about the Premier's threat to use the notwithstanding clause to strip the rights of children and the rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ students in Saskatchewan. The use of the notwithstanding clause circumvents Charter rights. It is a heavy-handed and deeply concerning precedent, violating the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusivity that every Canadian citizen holds dear.

We must uphold the rights of all individuals, especially the rights of the most vulnerable. I stand in solidarity with organizations like UR Pride, Southwest Saskatchewan Pride, and Saskatchewan child's advocate Lisa Broda, who have all voiced their concerns about the irreparable harm this policy will cause. Please use your influence and position to advocate for a more inclusive and respectful approach to this matter. The rights and well-being of 2SLGBTQ+ students should be protected and supported. Their voices

must be heard in shaping policy.

I urge you to denounce the use of the notwithstanding clause and support policies that promote equality, inclusivity, and respect for all students. Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to hearing your response and your commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of all Saskatchewan students.

Sincerely,
 Theo Houghtaling
 Swift Current, Saskatchewan

This is a letter from a family physician in Saskatoon Meewasin:

Dear Mr. Teed:

I'm a family physician in your riding in Saskatoon. I care for a large number of patients who are trans and gender-diverse and their families. I am writing to ask that you support our province's children, especially those who are trans and gender-diverse. Please oppose the government's parental rights bill, their current effort to force teachers to put parents before students.

[16:30]

Teachers have always gone beyond teaching their students. They are advocates for their pupils. Forcing them to put anyone else first is unconscionable. Teachers already collaborate with parents to support learners educationally and socially, and they will continue to do so. Given all we ask of teachers, they should be permitted to prioritize the safety of children rather than the egos of parents.

We do not tell those who come to the gender clinic what to do, but rather explore their feelings, experiences, and goals and help them work towards these goals in a safe manner. Parents are involved in the care of their children to the greatest extent possible, as with every child. The overwhelming majority of children are supported by their parents as they explore questions of gender. This because most parents understand this fact: a family's support is the single most important factor in the health of a child who is trans or gender-diverse.

Those who are not supported by family are at much higher risks for not only poor mental health but poor physical health. Children who are trans and gender-diverse are already walking a challenging road, trying to figure out who they are and stay safe while doing so. When difficult ideas like gender and sexuality . . . They share their stories with the people in their lives who they trust to be safe to tell. If they don't tell their parents, it's commonly because these parents have made it clear that they will not support a child who is trans or homosexual.

Forcing teachers to violate a child's trust to share a preferred name or pronoun if they've not felt safe to tell parents will further isolate kids who are already scared and alone, and should not be done. These kids already suffer disproportionately from depression and anxiety and suicidality as they go through this process. Outing them to

people they don't feel safe with will only increase the risk of suicide, already much higher in this population than the general population of children and teens.

This fall, Edsby in Saskatoon started changing names and gender markers of students who are trans and gender-diverse without permission from parents or kids. When a child opened up their class composite, they were faced with their birth name and gender marker often unknown until then by their peers. This revealing of their trans or gender-diverse identity without consent was unconscionable and harmed these already fragile kids. They were subjected to bullying and harm as a result.

A few days later parents' accounts were subsequently changed in the same way, again without permission from parents or kids. The number of families who approached me after these incidents in fear for their loved ones was large. Saskatchewan deserves better. Schools should be safe, supportive environments where kids whose home lives are tough can find calm and can thrive.

Rather than forcing teachers to share something about a child that the child doesn't feel safe sharing, perhaps we should spend time educating members of our society about the intangible and tangible benefits of acceptance and support. Perhaps, rather than spending time and energy on this issue, the government could spend time improving funding and supports for public education, or they could invest in improving primary care services offered to the people of Saskatchewan.

We deserve better than a government bent on firing people up over hot-button social issues to court votes. We deserve a government that will make life better for Saskatchewan. It's what we're paying for. The Sask Party needs to either start taking care of all of their constituents, or they need to get out of the way so the NDP can. [Hear, hear.]

[This is at the end. She says in bold]: Fight the parents' rights bill with all you have. Kids' lives depend on it.

Yours truly,
Ginger Rudy, MD

Thank you, Ginger. That was a very impactful statement, certainly highlighting some of the things that we have already been saying. Spend time improving and funding education. Support public education. Invest in primary care. That's ways that we can connect parents and kids.

This is another letter. It is anonymous but it is from a trans perspective. Another letter in my pile of 18 here.

Dear members of the legislature:

I am the proud parent . . .

They're also a parent so it kind of fits into the first category, but we get an extra one.

I'm the proud parent of a 29-year-old transgender nonbinary adult. Let me tell you what it was like for them to grow up

in rural Saskatchewan 20 years ago.

I apologize. This is a perspective of a parent of a trans child.

There were no support groups such as gay-straight alliances. There were no inclusive languages used in the classroom. Everything was discussed in the binary. There were no library books or educational materials that depicted members of the 2SLGBT+ community living their very normal, everyday family lives just like there are for the cisgender heterosexual kids. Imagine going through school knowing that you felt different from everyone else around you, but have had no reference or language to speak about it.

There was no place that felt safe to ask questions or learn anything other than the norms that were presented all around you. There was outright bullying in school. There was outright bullying at school if you presented as anything slightly different. How would you feel?

Under these oppressive circumstances from the community environment, it took our child a few years to get up the nerve to talk to us about their feelings. We were relieved that the issues they were having were identity issues. We had suspected something far more serious. This was an issue that we could learn more about together and search for supports.

It took a few years for them to figure that they were trans, and a couple more to discover that they were nonbinary, but they got there through extended family support, a couple of good friends, a loving church family, and exposure to truths other than the ones they had encountered growing up.

As a parent and a newly retired teacher, I have been so proud of the school system as it changed and adapted to provide children with truthful representation of all kinds of families, to let them know that other ways of being exist, and to provide support to those who needed the assurance that nothing is wrong with them if they identify as anything besides cisgender or heterosexual. History is filled with stories of two-spirit and queer people if we choose to acknowledge them. If only such support had been available when my children were in school.

My heart sank when I heard about the government's plan to introduce this latest policy. It is a huge mistake. There are young children in our schools right now who either have parents who are part of the 2SLGBTQ community or who already realize they are themselves.

They need to see themselves and their families represented in the lessons they learn in school. They need to feel safe and loved. Ideally parents will provide some of this support, but that is not always the case. A child spends a good deal of time with peers and staff at school, so it is imperative that it be a supportive environment. Parents have always had the option to pull their children out of certain parts of curriculum if they are uncomfortable.

I strongly urge Premier Moe and his government to abandon this policy. It is not the best interest of the children of our province.

Sincerely,
Anonymous resident of Saskatchewan

This letter is from Charlie:

Hello,

My name is Charlie. I'm 15 years old, and I'm a transgender male. When they decided to get this law passed by saying this will help set an equal-to-all divisions, as throughout the province the rules about preferred pronouns and names vary, that's just what they said so they wouldn't be openly discriminatory against the people of their province. But I can tell you that as a youth that has been affected by this, it does not help.

I am from a small town in rural Saskatchewan, but that is not where I go to school anymore. I now drive 45 minutes every day into Saskatoon to attend a school because I was a victim of physical and verbal discrimination. I had to move schools because I wasn't safe in a public building where all I was there to do was get an education. I wasn't safe for the only reason of how I wanted to express myself, all because of what I felt most comfortable identifying as.

I wish that schools would have to call people by their preferred names and pronouns if consulted, no matter if parents gave approval. Why do other people have to be involved with that basic human right? I understand that cisgender peoples don't know the horror of it. But let's just say one day you were called by a name that's not your own. You were identified as a gender that you do not identify as. How do you think that would make you feel? Depression affects the majority of trans youth, and I know there are statistics for that.

I appreciate the backlash and fight against the Sask Party because if our province continues down this path, it can turn into a hateful and dangerous place for our youth — not only the ones affected by this policy but the ones who are taught to think that what the Sask Party is doing is right. I do not want to be anonymous. Thank you for sharing my story.

Sincerely,
Part of the youth who are fed up with this . . . [crap].

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they used a different word, but I'm going to substitute that one because it is a little bit more closer to parliamentary language.

I just have a few more letters here of my 18 bundle, and then I think that really shows. So I'm going to continue to read through these a bit here. And I think those are what I will be putting onto the record today — 18 letters, seven of which are from parents. Different perspectives, engaging stakeholders, engaging queer and trans people in the process.

MLA Teed:

I am writing to express my outrage and deep concern regarding the Saskatchewan government's recent policy decision related to pronoun usage in schools. As a concerned citizen, a firm believer in equal rights and

inclusivity, and member of the 2SLGBTQ+IA community, I feel compelled to bring this matter to your attention.

I am a registered social worker who holds undergraduate degrees in psychology and social work, in addition to a graduate degree in women's, gender, and sexuality studies. I also spent nearly a decade working in classrooms across the province as a sexual health educator, working with more than 10,000 students in that course of time.

I have provided consultations on topics of gender and sexuality to the Ministry of Education, Sex Information & Education Council of Canada, Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan, and many other provincial and national organizations dedicated to safety and support of young people across the province.

In my academic, professional, and personal opinion, this policy unfairly targets some of the most vulnerable children in our community in addition to attacking our Charter rights. I understand that the government has a responsibility to enact policies that reflect the diverse needs and beliefs of citizens, however the recent pronoun policy has raised significant concerns with our community and beyond.

This policy is in direct conflict with the principles of equality and human rights that our province upholds, and violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees each and every Canadian the right to freedom of expression.

The intended policy is also a violation of provincial human rights legislation, which prohibits discrimination based on gender identity. This ill-conceived and harmful policy will have far-reaching consequences for some of the most marginalized groups of children in our community.

Canada is also a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which also guarantees the rights and freedom of expression and freedom of thought, and which also dictates that state parties ensure that institutions, including educational institutions responsible for the care of children, conform to standards established by competent authorities.

Holding particular expertise in anti-oppressive practices, it is my firm belief that the government's recent legislative order is unjustly putting children in the province in danger. Transgender and gender-diverse individuals face unique challenges in our society, including discrimination, harassment, and violence, and are more likely to report mental health difficulties.

Citing Veale et al., 2017.

It is critical that our government takes a stand in support of these marginalized communities and works to create a safe and inclusive environment for all citizens, regardless of their gender identity.

I urge the official opposition to challenge this policy. The government must engage in a meaningful dialogue with representatives of the 2SLGBT+ community, human rights

organizations, and the individuals who will be personally impacted by this decision.

[16:45]

Their failure to do so prior to implementing this harmful policy is a massive judicial overreach and has demonstrated lack of awareness of basic human rights framework and current research on gender, mental health, and education policy.

In closing, I emphasize the importance of addressing these issues. It is critical that we continue to uphold the values of diversity, inclusivity in our province's policies, practices, and classrooms.

Sincerely,
Natalya Mason, Registered Social Worker

To whom it may concern:

I coach para hockey. Formerly a teacher. One of my athletes identified as male. When a parent joined practice, also as a player, and started using the athlete's female name, I had to stop the practice and have the player reaffirm in front of the team which name was preferred. When the parent saw our team accept the player as who they were, the parent deferred to the athlete. You could really feel the parent soften, possibly seeing acceptance they had not likely seen in other aspects of their life.

Working in sports with athletes with disabilities, it is not uncommon to see discomfort from many who are unfamiliar with seeing different abilities. I would argue that this unfamiliarity leaves room for bigotry, because anger is a symptom of fear, and fear comes from the unfamiliar.

Safe spaces for "different" also create space for familiarity, and are just as I spoke to my son's class about disability.

So they ask questions, rather than bully him about wearing briefs, so they too can have discussions about identity. No one should have to feel targeted simply for being who they were born.

And this is an anonymous resident of Saskatoon.

This letter is an anonymous perspective that I have already read into the record earlier, so I'm going to put that one down.

And last but not least of my 18 bundle, seven of which are parents . . . I mean, I can keep going here. Encore presentation of an 18-letter package. They want more letters, more parents, more . . . Okay. This is from a queer perspective:

Hello, I hope you are doing well. I heard that your party is collecting letters. Feel free to use the following one.

Dear representatives of our province:

It is with greatened sadness, fear, and anger that I have heard the recent policy targeting one of the most vulnerable populations of our province — gender-nonconforming

youth.

As a gender-nonconforming individual myself, life has at times been very hard in this province. I have at times felt very alone, unsupported, non-existent. Many times as a result of this isolation, I have been to dark or even life-threatening places in terms of mental health. Thanks to the support in my life and increasing education on gender diversity, I feel a growing acceptance and great hope.

As a person who grew up in a family that has not always been supportive of the LGBTQ2+ community, I personally understand the danger that outing gender-diverse youths can have. This is a population with a high risk of suicide. It is also a population at a high risk of homelessness, because of unsupportive families who have thrown their children out of their homes.

Personally, my financial security and education were put at risk when I was outed without consent to a homophobic family member. This was in university when I had recourse to find another financial support and continue my schooling. Nevertheless, this was the darkest moment in my life. To feel my safety and security torn away from me against my will, because I was different, was confirmation of so much fear and darkness.

Outing children to their families is dangerous and reckless. Coming out is a deeply personal choice that has many legitimate risks. It is not always the right choice to make, and it is always the right of the person coming out to do so. Taking away that right is a breach to that person's privacy and can put the person's life at risk.

It is never harmful to call a child by their chosen name or pronouns. Creating a safe and accepting space where children can discover who they are there without risk of reprisal is essential in keeping these vulnerable children safe. Making sure that science-based education on sexuality and gender is available to us all so these youth can understand that, whatever others may say, fundamentally they are not wrong to exist and to be who they are — this is essential to saving lives.

If I had had that in my life earlier, I would have ameliorated so many hardships and so much pain. Humbly I ask, from the bottom of my heart, that you work to protect the rights of this vulnerable population.

And this comes from Mitchell Larson in Saskatoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is 18 letters, seven of which are from parents. We know that this policy was developed as such. I hope that by reading that into the record, additional perspectives are brought forward on this bill.

I'm going to take a quick peek, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to see if there were any other letters that I wanted to highlight just briefly here. There is one from a friend of mine:

To whom it may concern:

I am a Saskatchewan resident and a parent. I'm writing to

urge the government to stop going down this road. As a parent, I don't yet know how my son will identify as he grows up, but I want to live in a province that accepts him for who he becomes without prejudice.

Every parent hopes to be a part of their child's life, but my child is not my property. My rights do not supersede his rights as a human being. I want systems in place to support his mental health and identity.

Doctors take an oath to do no harm. I am asking that those same ethical standards be extended to our politicians. There is so much evidence that these pronoun policies will lead to increased depression, child abuse, homelessness, and suicide. Who wants these things for our children? Please do no harm.

In the larger scope of the situation, I'm appalled that the government is playing with our Charter rights. Using the notwithstanding clause in this situation is a gross misuse of the clause. Every citizen of Saskatchewan should be alarmed that their government is picking and choosing whose rights to undermine and strip away.

I'm afraid for the queer community of our province now, and I'm afraid for whatever minority group the government goes after next. Anyone will have a target on their back if the Sask Party believes it will score political points. This is an attack on our democracy. Our government needs to follow judicial processes and respect Canadian law.

Finally, look at history. Look at what happens when a government starts stripping away the rights of people. Let's do better and let's not go there. I want better for Saskatchewan.

Regards,
Rachel Loboda
Martensville, Saskatchewan

Thank you, Rachel, for sending that in. Rachel is one of my oldest friends. We can chart our relationship back to elementary school. And while I've been fairly busy in this job as of late, I haven't gotten to see her in a while, but certainly Rachel is one of the people that I confide in and chat with quite often about these issues and things going on, and consider her one of my strongest members of my support network. So thank you so much, Rachel, for submitting that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm just peeking through here to see if there's any others that jump out to me. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know we just . . . There's so many letters, and I apologize to folks that we didn't get to read their letter. You know, we were inundated. You know, it's an amazing problem to have when you're inundated with support and you're inundated with words from the communities who are affected by these policies. And that's exactly, it's exactly what we wanted to do by making the call for these.

This is a good one. This is a perspective from a trans and nonbinary person. It's a little shorter:

As a trans, nonbinary person, I can say something as small

as a pronoun can have huge impact. I changed my pronouns as soon as I graduated high school, precisely because of how complicated it would have been socially in school. Having to put that change off for so long was frustrating and stunted my growth as an individual.

I really hope that if schools can make steps to respect pronouns and create a safer environment for everyone, it will help kids respect themselves and be more at ease with their identities.

Navigating queer identity is a lot of work for a young person, and little pieces of support from the school system could really help kids feel like they aren't so different and there's nothing wrong with them. I hope my statement helps.

Best,
Jasper Gass

This is an anonymous, another short queer perspective:

Dear NDP representatives:

I am a queer student who graduated high school in 2022. This new policy takes away the rights of queer students. As a queer student myself, and as many of my queer colleagues and peers have mentioned, the Premier's actions are purposely trying to suspend the rights of all people in Saskatchewan. This impacts our society by showing those that it's okay to be intolerant, dismissive, and hateful towards LGBTQ+ people in our community.

Another impact of this bill is the violation of children's rights in Canada. Children, including queer members of my family who are in school, do not feel safe with their classmates. The children of this country are our future and they should be treated as such. Thank you very much for your time.

A concerned resident of Saskatchewan.

I think I'll . . . one more.

I am a transgender, nonbinary adult in Saskatoon. I knew my identity from a very young age, but at that time did not have the language or understanding to express it. I struggled immensely in high school, in large part not being able to feel or able to express myself authentically. Once I was able to put it into words, once I was able to put words to my identity and use a name and pronouns that fit me, I thrived. I thrived in university.

I also know the experiences and trauma of being outed before ready. While I was just starting to come into my own identity publicly, my parents were told of this change without consent. While I had always planned on telling them eventually in my own method of choosing, this outing robbed our family of that moment and caused a deep rift and discomfort in our relationship. This is yet to fully heal, years after the fact.

I am so grateful that the many years since I was a student in Saskatchewan's public schools, the community has gained

a knowledge and language of transgender experiences and young people can put words to their identities.

I am deeply saddened that the government would create and vehemently defend a policy against court injunction and the recommendation of the child advocate and LGBTQ+ community groups, that I know by my own lived experience will cause trauma and will cause Saskatchewan students to struggle further in school. When classrooms are already overcrowded and underfunded, not allowing children a safe space to be their authentic selves whether or not they are ready to come out at home is just another way that our provincial government is letting down Saskatchewan's future.

This was an anonymous letter from Saskatoon.

[17:00]

I want to quickly before I'm done here, and I apologize — I keep saying that — I want to read some statements from some organizations that had sent in statements, but I may not have them with me at this time. I think that this is a good one to read. It's from the Saskatchewan Pride Network.

Dear Minister Duncan:

This is the second letter drafted and sent to your office in regard to the policy announcement on August 22nd. We understand the importance of fostering open communication between parents and educators, however this new policy can undermine the well-being and mental health of transgender and nonbinary adults.

By necessitating parental consent for something as personal as one's name and pronoun, we risk creating an environment where these students may feel invalidated, unsupported, and unable to express their authentic selves. It's important to remember that for many transgender and nonbinary individuals, their chosen names and pronouns are crucial to their identity and self-acceptance. These changes will directly impact the safety and well-being of youth in Saskatchewan, and implementing a policy that could result in increased harm in vulnerable youth is not the path to inclusion, acceptance, and a more diverse Saskatchewan.

"Parent/guardian involvement is critical in every student's education," Duncan said. "Schools will continue to ensure safe learning environments where all students feel included, protected, and respected." This change will foster exclusion for transgender and nonbinary adults.

The first letter we sent on Tuesday, August 22nd has yet to be acknowledged. The follow-up letter reminds the Saskatchewan government of the 2SLGBTQIA+ residents of Saskatchewan and our interest in opening discussions with government officials to determine a solution for protecting queer youth in Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan Pride Network is calling on Saskatchewan government to immediately pause or reverse this policy, invite consultation with the province's 2SLGBTQ+IA community through its front-line service organizations —

Pride organizations, school GSAs, and all other interested parties with a stake in this policy — publicly share the safeguards that will be in place to protect youth that inform teachers of their need to change pronouns.

Saskatchewan has the potential to lead by example in promoting inclusive education to all. Let us work together to ensure that our schools are spaces where diversity is celebrated and every student can be their authentic self.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to seeing positive changes that reflect the values of compassion, equality, and inclusivity that our province stands for.

Yours in Pride,
Andrew Matheson, Saskatchewan Pride Network, president

Sent August 28, 2023. No acknowledgement and no response. Follow-up to original letter sent August 22nd; no acknowledgement and no response.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think there's some really interesting points to make. Firstly, there are organizations out there that are willing to come to the table and act as stakeholders in development of this policy. There are many organizations that would drop everything they are doing to show up and provide input on this legislation. The Saskatchewan Pride Network is no different. They're calling on the government to immediately pause or reverse this policy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've been pretty clear. We'd be happy with a pause of this policy, a wait-and-see. Let it run itself through the courts. It would be great to see this policy reversed. I would love to see the final results from this challenge. Pause the policy. Let the court challenge go through. Respect the courts.

It's also interesting to see that the Pride Network is also calling on the government to provide safeguards. We do not see any safeguards in this legislation. I'm really glad that I read this one, because I feel like a safeguard clause would be so important, something that we can point to, something that we can say queer and trans youth will be protected in Saskatchewan schools.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm just going to quickly look for an email from the Broadway Theatre. Sorry, not the Broadway Theatre. I want Persephone Theatre. I thought I had that statement with me, but I don't.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was really heartening to see some of the organizations that I have relayed with as the official opposition critic for Parks, Culture and Sport. I apologize to the House that I must have misplaced them in the process of building these letter binders. But just a thanks to the organizations in our province who took time to stand up for their communities. You know, if I can paraphrase the letter, basically there is a lot of programming that these community organizations offer. And these organizations are striving to provide safe and welcoming and open environments.

I went to Persephone Theatre just recently for a youth drag show, and it was amazing. It was like a drag camp for kids. So it was like a week-long event. And I just got to like explore everything

that is fun and interesting about drag. They got to develop a persona. They picked a name, and they got to do a little show at the end. And some constituents of mine had their kids involved and so I snuck away to go witness that. And so it was really lovely to see organizations like Persephone Theatre reach out, that their executive director penned a letter.

I'm thinking now to one last letter that I had and maybe it's here. Maybe it's in this pile, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This one is actually I think really important to read into the record. This is from Heather Hale, who is the executive director of Saskatoon . . . Sorry, she was the executive director of Saskatoon Sexual Health.

I'm writing to share my concerns with the recent anti-2SLGBTQI+ education policy by the Saskatchewan government. I'm extremely disappointed to see that this policy is enacted on such short notice and with so little input from citizens. Please consider this my input.

This policy fuels homophobia and transphobia in our province and has no place in our school communities or province. I stand with queer and trans community in Saskatchewan and across the country that is calling for immediate repeal of this policy. Their voices should be centred on this discussion. We have heard loud and clear that this policy will cause harm to children, children who should have the autonomy to make the decisions that affirm their sexuality and gender, and be supported by policies that keep safe and supported by trusted adults as they navigate home and learning environments. Children should not be positioned to be outed by schools.

This policy is evidence that the government does not have the best interests of students at heart, but rather is content to create hostile learning environments where some students will feel alienated and bullied.

Having spent nearly five years as the executive director for Saskatoon Sexual Health, I'm a strong advocate for comprehensive sexual education and consent-focused sex health education, and believe it is critical to reduce Saskatchewan's nation-leading levels of teen pregnancy. There's overwhelming evidence that shows that comprehensive sexual education is the upstream preventative solution that we need.

I would also like to dispel the myth that parents and guardians were not aware of these methods and do not support them. Across Canada the national parents survey conducted in 2022 shows that 85 per cent of parents across Canada support the teaching of sexual health education in schools. That number rose to 80 per cent when looking at the Prairie provinces. This policy's in direct contradiction to the wishes of parents. I join the call for you, the Premier, the government, and all MLAs to revoke these harmful, regressive policies.

This letter . . . I'm going to read this one as anonymous.

I am an 11-year-old nonbinary student at Crescents School in Regina. I am writing in opposition to the Saskatchewan government's new pronoun policy. As a nonbinary kid, I

know that not every parent is as supportive as mine. Some parents will get angry and stop providing care for their kids if they learn they want to change their pronouns. I am worried about the kids that could be hurt or kicked out of their house. I think that a child's need for privacy and safety is more important than a parent or guardian's wish to know everything about their child's choices.

The Saskatchewan government's policy has made me very angry and sad. I hope that the government will decide not to use their pronoun policy so that kids can be happy and safe.

And this was directed to the MLA for Regina Lakeview.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I could go on here. There's just so many folks who reached out and I'm just so appreciative of those who have. Again I apologize if I have missed your letter, and I know my colleagues will be reading some as well. We are just so appreciative for folks who heeded the call and sent in their valuable impact statements over the last little while.

Okay, I was wrong. I have one more I'm going to read. This is from a constituent who wished to remain anonymous.

To all those who choose to ignore the fact that people who aren't cisgender exist, we do in fact exist. And we are tired of being pushed down and shamed. We are tired of not getting the equality that all humanity should have.

The notwithstanding clause you are considering using is an act of prejudice and transphobia. I consider myself lucky to have supportive family, friends, and loved ones. Many do not have this luxury. This luxury should be a normal human right. Alas those in favour of using the notwithstanding clause are the reason it's not. The reason that there is so much despair in this world is because of the fact that we even have to fight just like this.

Imagine being a trans kid without a supportive family for a second. Just imagine you're walking home one day, just an average school day, with an acid test. When you get home your caregivers are furious. They say they get a call about you wanting to change your name and pronouns to feel slightly more your authentic self. And they've lost all love for you in the blink of an eye, not even caring about what you were so excited to show them. Just for living the way you want. Just for wanting an ounce of safety in school, a place that should be safe.

If you use the clause, many kids will face that reality. If you don't feel sympathy, you should feel shame wanting to deny people their rights. Coming out is a journey of self-discovery, the key word in the phrase being "self." Taking that away is a sick thing that very few would even think about doing.

Sincerely,
Sparrow

They use they/them pronouns.

I've one more that I'm going to read from a constituent as I'm looking through this list here:

Dear Mr. Teed:

First of all, I am thankful for your representation of progressive, equitable perspectives and policies in Saskatchewan's legislature. It seems as needed now than ever. I am a constituent in North Park and very proud to say that you are my MLA.

[17:15]

Secondly, I write to submit a statement of concern about the government's policy which requires parental approval for students' chosen names, gender identity, or gender expression in Saskatchewan schools.

Transgender and nonbinary children are already vulnerable due to social stigma and open discrimination. When their families do not support them, we know they are at higher risk of mental health challenges, suicide, and homelessness. This policy threatens harm to an already vulnerable group.

I understand from teachers in my life that they and their colleagues unanimously oppose this policy, as they wish to ensure a safe space for all students. It's hard to understand the rationale for the policy. Ostensibly it is to please traditional families about cultural influences around sexuality and gender identity. However there is insufficient evidence of widespread parental concerns about this in Saskatchewan or harm to children and youth due to shifting cultural attitudes about gender.

I was pleased to see the court decision issue an injunction to pause the implementation of the policy, and am distressed that the government is gathering tomorrow to push through some kind of legislation to enforce it under banner of the section 33 of the Charter. The notwithstanding clause should be used in the most extraordinary instances, and only when accompanied by widespread public support. It is not a licence to discriminate. This is time to press pause; consult parents, youth, and their teachers; and gather research, which would all bode in favour of dispensing with the policy.

Thank you for raising your voice of behalf of all of us concerned about this policy.

Warm regards,
Amanda Dodge
Saskatoon

More letters from the . . . Ah, here we go. Persephone Theatre. I am going to read their impact statement as well.

Dear Hon. Mr. Cockrill:

On behalf of Persephone Theatre, we are writing to you out of concern regarding the proposed policy changes for the Ministry of Education and the Premier's proposal to invoke the notwithstanding clause to force their implementation.

We are a non-profit arts organization that serves our community through the performing arts, which include providing arts programming specifically for young people.

We are very concerned that these new policies, which restrict the sharing of knowledge pertaining to sexuality, gender, and queer identities with youth, will directly affect the ability for students and teachers to attend performances, or to host shows that we bring directly into schools province-wide. This would be devastating. This would have a devastating effect on our operations.

We program plays that reflect the world around us. Those plays reflect a variety of topics, identities, and lived experiences and sometimes tell stories from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Our plays help young people understand the world and their place in it. We share stories that promote equality and inclusivity in all forms. These plays might also include areas, perspectives, or characters that, under these new policies, teachers will be unable to bring their students to without fear of reprisal.

Our recent production of *Bright Half Life* by Tanya Barfield received this feedback from a teacher:

I brought my students to the student matinee of *Bright Half Life* recently. The next day in class, we had an incredibly rich, respectful conversation about our opinions of the show. So many discussions about what a healthy relationship is, the challenges of being in an interracial relationship, and what it means to be LGBTQ+ in this day and age.

It's hard to articulate how well my students grasped so many of the major themes in *Bright Half Life*. It's a love story, but it's not. It's life and growing pains and the good and the bad. I was floored how many of them understood the commentary on the complexities of life and love below the surface. Thank you, Persephone. Another beautiful story brought to the Prairies.

They continue on in the letter:

Youth programming is a core part of our activities, and we are worried about how these new policies will affect our ability to fulfill our mandate. We feel it incredibly important to share the ways in which these policies might impact communities outside of schools. We respectfully request that you use your influence and position to advocate for a more inclusive and respectful approach to this matter. Consultation is needed with experts and the community to develop policies that support rights and well-being of all students, including 2SLGBTQ+IA students.

We will be continuing to program plays for young people that represent the world young people are growing up in, which means representing them and their families and stories on stage. We ask for help in ensuring there is an audience for us to perform to. Please find our formal letter attached.

Best,
Heather Cant, artistic director
Breanne Harmon, executive director

Thank you so much to Persephone Theatre for sending in this just heartfelt letter, the comments from this teacher. And to Persephone Theatre, I have read it. The Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport . . . I guess I'm not allowed to say that they're present, but I have read the letter to the legislature. Just a really important perspective from community-based organizations that just do so much.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I've said, there's just so many letters, too many to count. But I hope that by reading them into the record today, specifically starting with an 18-letter package, 7 of which were parents, are an important . . . that we are able to raise their voices, raise the voices of folks who weren't consulted in this policy.

So in conclusion to my comments here today, I want to say that I believe that all kids deserve the respect and freedom to be who they are no matter their background. It can be tough to feel like you're different while growing up, but no matter your background — whether you're gay, trans, an immigrant — to anyone who's faced challenges of being who they are, all kids in Saskatchewan deserve the freedoms to be themselves. And they deserve the freedoms to learn and grow in a safe environment. All youth deserve to be respected in our schools, including 2SLGBTQ+ students.

Saskatchewanians, as Saskatchewanians to Saskatchewanians, we believe in the human rights of children. We believe in "many peoples, strength." Our values have always been to help each other out no matter our backgrounds.

We cannot support this conservative Saskatchewan Party government rolling back protections for vulnerable students, and we will not stand by while they play politics instead of supporting kids in our province.

With this I move to adjourn debate on Bill 137.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — The member has moved to adjourn debate. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — No. No has it. I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Mr. Clarke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a dark time in Saskatchewan history when the government actively chooses to take away the rights of children in this province, but unfortunately it is where we find ourselves today because of this government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Today I rise to stand against this discriminatory bill that seeks to crush the rights of children in Saskatchewan, exclusively for political gain. I say for political gain because so far the government has failed to offer any logical reason to justify the need for this amendment to *The Education Act*. The Education minister and the Premier say it will increase parental involvement in schools, but nothing in this bill will actually do that.

Let me be clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For the last eight years, I

have been a grade 6/7 teacher, and I know that parental involvement is integral to a student's success at school. I saw it for eight years, and I unequivocally support increasing parental involvement in schools, as do the rest of my colleagues on this side of the House. Students flourish when they have parents or caregivers who are engaged in their learning. However, again this bill does nothing to engage parents further in schools, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There is nothing here to help parents who are working two jobs to make ends meet and who can't be at home with their children in the evening to help them study or work on homework. Fixing that would impact parental involvement in schools.

There is nothing here for families who may have a language barrier, who can't speak English and are unable to support their child's learning at home. Fixing that would have an impact on parental involvement in schools.

There is nothing to bring community into schools. All this bill does is out trans, nonbinary, or non-gender-conforming students who have said they don't feel safe or aren't ready yet to tell their caregivers.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we're here in an emergency sitting, an emergency sitting so that the government can ram through a bill without any consultation in record time. This bill is going to be rammed through this week with the notwithstanding clause so that the government can take away the rights of children from the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about how much of an emergency this scenario, this bill seeks to address in Saskatchewan schools. I mean again here we are in an emergency sitting, here so the government can pass the discriminatory bill that Judge Megaw said will cause irreparable harm to children.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan schools, it is estimated that about 10 per cent of students are 2SLGBTQ+, meaning those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited, etc. Now in Canada, according to Stats Canada, depending on your age group the percentage of people who identify as transgender is as high as 0.79 per cent — not 79 per cent — 0.79 per cent. So here we are debating a bill in an emergency sitting that's going to affect 1 per cent, or less than 1 per cent of kids at school. It also means that 99.2 per cent of students are non-transgender and are not going to be using different names or different pronouns in schools. And so this legislation will have no effect on them.

Mr. Speaker, the instance where a Saskatchewan parent has been angry that their child is using a different pronoun or name at schools is so rare. Earlier this week the Premier, the Health minister, and the Education minister couldn't even give one example of a scenario that they had been made aware of. Now there is one story that the Justice minister shared yesterday. So sure, there's one story there.

But let's be clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are here in an emergency sitting, spending who knows how many hundreds of thousands of extra dollars, taxpayer dollars, so the government can ram through a bill using the notwithstanding clause, which hasn't gone through this course yet, that the Saskatchewan child

and youth advocate has stated tramples children's Charter rights, that a Human Rights Commissioner has resigned over, that will apply to some portion of the student population that is less than 1 per cent. And somehow, Mr. Speaker, somehow this will increase parental involvement in schools, or so the government says. This is a disgrace, an utter disgrace.

[17:30]

I want to thank my colleagues for the work that they've put in in the last couple days to bring the voices of the many, many Saskatchewan people who are concerned about this legislation into the House. I've been listening closely over the last couple days, and you can feel the hurt, the fear that people who will be affected by this bill — whether it's families, whether it's parents, whether it's kids, whether it's teachers — you can feel the fear that they carry because of this legislation coming forward. I want to thank them for sharing their thoughts.

We know that this bill is going to pass regardless of what we do. It's probably going to pass within the next couple days, again in record time, a week instead of months, which it should have been passed in so people could continue to provide feedback to the government, some second thought. But we're not doing that. We're in this emergency sitting.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will come back to the debate around the government's bill, but given that this is my maiden speech in the legislature, I have been told that I can spend some time reflecting on my journey to get here. Awesome.

I must begin, first and foremost, with a thank you to the people of Regina Walsh Acres. I want to say thank you for electing me as your MLA. Throughout the campaign I was continuously in awe of the kindness, thoughtfulness, and honesty that you treated me with at the doorstep. You shared your dreams, your ideas, and hopes for our constituency, our city, and our province.

But you also shared your fears and your struggles and your hardship, whether that be in the health care system, the education system, at work, or through not being able to access the supports and services you or your loved ones or your neighbours needed. I feel so privileged by your willingness to share these parts of your life with me. These stories, and I'm sure the ones that you will continue to tell me in the future, they mean a lot to me and will shape how I represent you in this building and in our community.

As I said on the doorstep to many of you, my goal as an MLA is to be one who shows up, who works hard for the people in our constituency. That is my commitment. And so I look forward to working with you in the future. So thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's still a bit hard to wrap my head around the fact that I rise here before you in this Chamber on the floor of the Assembly. And prior to me becoming an MLA, as I said before, I was a teacher. And my most memorable experiences with this building was bringing my class here from Lakeview School just a few blocks west of the legislature.

And we'd see question period each year, and we'd meet our MLA. We'd sit up in the gallery on that side, because when I came we were always in the member for Regina Lakeview so

we'd sit on the opposition gallery. And my kids would sit there and then we'd watch the proceedings. And the students and I agreed that the most exciting part was always question period, albeit they gave me a lot of surprised looks as a result of, you know, the often raucous behaviour of some members. I'm looking at the member from Cumberland. I hope, I hope my behaviour in this Assembly will make my former students proud.

Someone else I hope I have made proud, Mr. Speaker, is my political mentor, cherished friend, and the former member of this House for Indian Head-Wolseley and then Indian Head-Milestone, Mr. Lorne Scott. Lorne served in the Romanow government from 1991 to 1999 and was the person who first suggested I should run in provincial politics.

Now we have spent a lot of time together over the years, banding birds across the southern part of this province, including ferruginous hawks, Swainson's hawks, great horned owls, and of course his favourites: mountain bluebirds, tree swallows, and purple martins. He has been a trusted advisor for many years, and I am so thankful for how he has pushed me and guided me along this path.

And a fun story to share with folks in the House here: when I was a young boy, an elementary school boy, there was . . . our class went on a field trip to the display ponds in Wascana Park. And we were releasing wood ducks that were . . . they were trying to bolster the local population and introduce them into Wascana Park. And they had those big wooden boxes that they nest in that had been placed around the centre. And actually as an elementary school kid, we actually got to hold on to the ducks and throw them out, release them into the display ponds.

And looking back, we actually got a picture of the class at the display ponds. And years later we were looking at the picture, and who was in that picture? Lorne Scott as the minister of Environment. We didn't even know each other back then but it was cool, a cool connection to have.

I also want to congratulate Lorne on a new book that he is profiled in. Andrea Olive wrote it. And the book is called *Protecting the Prairies: Lorne Scott and the Politics of Conservation*, and it's out either now or in the very near future.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stand before you as one person, but it took a huge team to get me here. And I would like to take a moment to acknowledge their contributions: firstly, to my two campaign managers, Tria Donaldson and Steven Lloyd. Tria was my campaign manager during the nomination process and worked tirelessly to help me secure the nomination. She was encouraging, hard-working, and laser-focused on keeping me on track. And I must acknowledge the amazing contributions that she made as the campaign manager in the Lumsden-Morse by-election, where Kaitlyn Stadnyk was the NDP candidate.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the new member from Lumsden-Morse on his by-election win as well.

Mr. Speaker, my other campaign manager, Steven Lloyd, took over for the by-election campaign and masterfully managed a huge group of volunteers and staff. He did it with gusto — granted, with little to no smiling. And I will say though on election night he hit me with a celebratory hug like a freight train

plowing into a gopher on a prairie train track. He was excited that night. Steven was hard-working, steadfast, and meticulous. I don't think he gets enough credit for the amazing, innovative job he did on my campaign. But I do truly value his efforts and I will forever be grateful to Tria and Steven for their work in getting me here.

I also want to thank Marissa Kakakaway and Dylan McConnell for their non-stop efforts in the campaign. Both were a pleasure to work with. Thank you to Mumtaz Zaidi for keeping the office running so smoothly. Thank you to my sign crew, in particular Richard Shanks and my father-in-law, Randy Martin, for continually getting those signs out there each day.

And then to my amazing door knocking team — I am indebted to them — the unstoppable Andrea Crellin, Owen, Awan, Isabella Grajczyk, Eric Horbal, and Carter Antoine. These folks showed up day after day to help me, and it was so much fun to have them there with me literally every step along the way.

There were a lot of other volunteers who helped on the doorstep, and to them I am so thankful. I also need to mention the incredible Regina Walsh Acres executive who helped me along the way as well.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and member for Regina Lakeview needs a special thank you for her unwavering dedication to get me elected. She could have spent the summer relaxing at some summer getaway, but instead we spent many days during the campaign out on the doorstep, listening and connecting with folks to hear the issues that people want their government to solve. Door after door, people were inspired by her vision for this province, and so was I. She is a fearless leader. She is compassionate and cares so deeply about the people of this province.

I also want to say thank you to all of my other colleagues on this side of the House who also all showed up to door knock and poll vote during those by-elections. Your commitment was so motivating and kept me energized, and I'm so proud to be joining this team.

Another key player on my team was my mom, Ramona Clarke, and she's sitting up in the gallery. I want to welcome her to her legislature. She's been sitting here in the gallery since 3:30 waiting for the member from Saskatoon Meewasin to wrap up, but he kept on going which was great. But it's good to have her here on this day.

My mom is a chartered professional accountant, and she has with much delight taken on the role of being my business manager in both of my election campaigns in 2020 and again in 2023. She is incredibly organized, a trait that she did not successfully pass on to me. But she keeps everything in order, and I'm so thankful for her continuous and selfless help to get me here. So thank you.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank my dad, Barry Clarke, who I had the honour of recognizing in a members' statement this morning, someone who I have admired for years as a selfless volunteer in the city, who is also a chartered professional accountant — accountants, good people they are.

To my two sisters, Kirsten Turlock and Jessica Clarke, and their

partners, Jeff and Mackenzie, and even my cousins and aunts and uncles for the support and encouragement they have given me over the years and during the by-election: thank you.

Someone else who was such a constant support for me and someone I am so excited to be working with here in this building was my friend Jannet Shanks. Jannet has been around this building for a while now — I'm not going to say how long — and she's been a part of a lot of campaigns. But she was with me on the doorsteps so often, keeping me motivated, keeping me upbeat, and she was such a rock star. And I hope she's listening right now.

But it wasn't just the doorstep. She was willing to take on whatever job needed to get done — treats, sweeping up the floor in the campaign office — all with a smile on her face. And she was so good to my kids, Mr. Speaker, during the campaign. I have twin girls, and they were tracking their steps when they would come door knocking with me, and then leave notes for Jannet in the campaign office with their totals to compare with her steps on the next day. So I'm so grateful for Jannet's support and trust.

There are many other people who have bolstered me in various ways over the last few years, including past students, friends, and family. And through all the big and little ways people have aided in getting me here, I am grateful. Their contributions have meant so much.

Mr. Speaker, lastly I need to thank my family, specifically my wife, Kristen Martin, and my daughters Rowan and Teal. Rowan and Teal have been incredible on this path. At only 11 years old, having their dad be active in politics has been a large part of their entire life on this planet.

I was honoured this summer when they asked to come door knocking with me in the evenings, and I think it was a life-altering experience for them to get a glimpse into the lives of other people, to hear other people's stories. One night I was driving home with Teal after an evening of door knocking, and I asked her, what do you think of all this political stuff? She was quiet for a moment, and then she said, well based on what we've heard on the doorstep, Dad, it sounds like a lot of people need help. Hopefully you can help them. And I thought truer words couldn't have been spoken.

I was so proud to have them walk into the election night victory party with me on August 10th, to be greeted by a wall of deafening cheering sound and so many smiles. We didn't talk about that night for a few weeks, but eventually I asked them what that moment had been like for them.

Now to put some context so you have some . . . What's the word? To give you some perspective for the . . . Ah, whatever. The girls had recently gotten new birthday watches that could track their heart rate. And so when we were talking about what was that moment like for you, Teal said again, when we walked into the room, I got a heart rate alert from my watch that my beats were 141, and that's the highest it's ever been, she said. We chuckled about that for a long time.

[17:45]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my wife, Kristen, and I met at the University of Regina way back in 2006. She graduated with her honours in biology and then completed a master's in natural resource management at the University of Manitoba. She now works for the Nature Conservancy of Canada in the Saskatchewan chapter as the conservation science and planning manager.

She is the most thoughtful and compassionate person that I know. She is an amazing mom, an incredible gardener, and a prolific reader. She is my best friend and she has been unwaveringly supportive in helping me get here, and I cannot thank her enough. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that I will be able to make all of my supporters and friends and family proud of the work that I am able to accomplish in this House.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to acknowledge that my privilege of getting to stand here as a member of this twenty-ninth Assembly comes at the price of tragedy. I would like to take the opportunity to honour Derek Meyers, the former member of Regina Walsh Acres who was elected on October 26, 2020. As everyone in this House will know, Mr. Meyers passed away earlier this year on March 28th, 2023, after a significant battle with cancer. Now I never met Mr. Meyers, but in preparation for my speech here today I made sure to read many articles about him, including as an MLA, an advocate, and as a sports reporter, as well as reading a number of his speeches in *Hansard*.

During the campaign, I also had the honour of meeting a number of his friends who spoke very fondly of him. From what I have read and what I have had shared with me, he was an amazing human being. He was a husband, a son, a father, a brother, and an uncle, amongst many other things. And by all accounts he was in this role as an MLA for all of the right reasons, primarily to be in the service of others. It is heartbreaking to have lost someone like him at only the age of 45.

In reading through some of Mr. Meyers's speeches that he gave here in the Assembly, I noticed his unbelievable strength in talking about difficult subjects, in particular the strength he demonstrated in speaking about the loss of his daughter Teigha to suicide. Teigha died just days before the 2020 provincial election began, and I don't know how you do what Mr. Meyers did at that moment in time, participating in an election campaign while mourning the loss of a child.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to read an excerpt from Mr. Meyers's maiden speech here today to remember him and what he was fighting for, and to continue to help him carry the light of his daughter. And I quote:

Mr. Speaker, I think all of us in this House can agree that there's no greater loss than losing one's child. People say to me that they feel sorry for me, and I say, don't feel sorry for me; feel sorry for that little girl and the struggles that she had. Feel sorry for what she had to endure. I choose to speak about Teigha and her battle because we need to. Teigha was a strong young woman in this life and I'm determined that her legacy will continue to be strong. Teigha had been my light and now she can serve to be the light for so many others and so many youth that are out there suffering with mental illness.

My children, the children of Walsh Acres, and the children of Saskatchewan have always been and will always be one of my biggest motivations to serve in this Assembly. Former premier Brad Wall asked the question, did you leave things better than you found them? That is my mission and that should be our mandate. Teigha taught me and continues to teach me how to be a better dad, a better person, and she guides me to be the best representative I can for Walsh Acres and for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my deepest condolences to Mr. Meyers's family. I cannot imagine what it has been like for them for the past seven months or the past three years, and my heart goes out to them.

I also want to extend my condolences to all the members on the opposite side of the House for the loss of their friend and colleague. I am truly sorry for your loss. And I would like to offer my condolences to the many people in Regina Walsh Acres and across this city who are still mourning the loss of their friend Mr. Meyers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Regina Walsh Acres is a pretty amazing part of the city of Regina. It encompasses the neighbourhoods of Regent Park, Normanview, Walsh Acres, Sherwood Estates, and McCarthy Park. It has eight elementary schools within its boundaries and includes a wide variety of places of worship, demonstrating the diversity of the city of Regina.

During my time on the doorstep, which covered the entire constituency multiple times, it was a pleasure to get to know the good folks of these communities, and I am excited about the opportunity to continue to connect with them in the future.

I've gotten to know folks on the Normanview Residents Group and the Regent Park Community Association. These are amazing groups of people working hard to make their communities better, and again I look forward to working with and meeting more of the people of this community.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to acknowledge the other candidates who ran in Regina Walsh Acres in the by-election. Those included Nevin Markwart, Rose Buscholl, and Joseph Reynolds. Participation in a democracy matters, and I know all too well how they put their lives on hold to run in these by-elections.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this summer I was reflecting on my time as a teacher at the same time as I was talking to many Regina Walsh Acres parents and grandparents about the state of our education system. I realized that the grade 8s that just graduated this spring, who are currently in grade 9, were in grade 1 when I started teaching.

Now unfortunately, for their entire elementary school career, funding per student has dropped continuously. That means that each year, more programs were cut. New fees were introduced. Existing fees were hiked, and there were fewer support staff to help students who need extra support.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the last eight years, I have worked at an elementary school with Regina Public. And for all eight of those years, I taught a grade 6/7 split. I really enjoyed working with that age group. I like to say, they're old enough to start critically

thinking about a lot of different issues and topics that we were able to discuss with some interesting conversations, but still young enough to maybe think, maybe, that I'm kind of cool. Usually not, though.

But the benefit of having worked with the same grade for so many years is that you're able to hone your craft and kind of become an expert in the curriculum and how to deliver it, how to connect with these kids. I've got to tell you, I loved being a teacher, loved it. And it wasn't until . . . Because the by-election happened over the summer, I didn't take any time off of being a teacher. We ended the school year in June as per normal, and then campaigning started into July and August.

It wasn't until three weeks after school had started this fall, when I went back to visit my school, Grant Road School, and saw my students that I've taught for the last two years, that I really recognize how much I miss being a teacher. And I'd only been away for three months, but some of them had grown so much, and their voices had changed, and it was fun to see them. It reminded me of what I was missing.

But I feel honoured to be here in this Chamber, to work and to make Saskatchewan a better place for them to grow up in and for them to raise their families and just thrive.

I also want to give a good shout-out to some of my fellow colleagues, fellow teacher colleagues who were there for me, who mentored me over the years. My marigold was Rochelle Anderson at Lakeview School. She recently retired. It would have been last year . . . or no, this June. We retired kind of at the same time from teaching. She was amazing.

We worked together for five years at Lakeview School. And it didn't matter what questions, you know. As a brand new teacher, first-year teacher, you know, a parent emails you and you're like, how do I respond to this? Or a kid does something in class and you're like, how do I deal with this? I could go to her and she'd always have an answer, some reassuring words. Sort of turn me around and, get back in there, champ. So I appreciate her so much.

To Shauna Drackett, another grade 7/8 teacher at Lakeview School who worked in this Assembly for many years as a Page when she was young. And then to my colleagues in Grant Road School, Graham Richardson and Megan Picton, who have been so much fun to work with over the last two years. And I miss not being back at school with them this fall.

Now a big part of why I decided to run in provincial politics was my first-hand view of the deteriorating education system. Only two years into my teaching career, the Wall government tabled its devastating 2017 budget that saw \$54 million cut from the education system. And in one quick chop, many of the programs that had been offered for years and were of great benefit to students and families, well they were gone.

One example: the Discovery Preschool, which was in my school at Lakeview School, was cut due to the massive budget cuts. This program was for kids with disabilities to get ready for kindergarten with a teacher alongside other students, and it was an amazing program. But just like that it was gone. Hasn't come back.

The grade 7 canoeing program, which was one that I cherished. I love getting in a canoe just like my buddy here, member from Regina Rosemont. This program saw every grade 7 student across Regina Public get four times in a canoe — once at the Lawson pool to learn how to sink the canoe and then get it back out of the water as a team, and then three sessions at Wascana Park to actually get their rowing in and become acquainted at paddling . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . What did I say, row? Paddle? Oh sorry, sorry, sorry, sir. But unfortunately that experience was cut too, and it didn't come back.

Since that time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government talks about record education budgets. But our provincial population has been growing so much, meaning more students in the division, which hasn't . . . The funding hasn't kept up with the number of students in classrooms, meaning there's lower per-student funding each year, which has meant larger classes, more complex classrooms with fewer supports.

And I think my colleague, the member from Saskatoon Eastview, did a great job a couple of days ago, yesterday I guess, in comparing those numbers. From 2021-2022 to 2022-'23 there were 3,840 new students in the provincial system and there were literally 66.1 fewer teachers in the system. I don't know how to describe that to people other than a cut to the education system, to go down by that many teachers.

And I've got to say it's disappointing to hear the Education minister suggest that there are ample supports for kids in schools to access mental health because that has not been my experience. And I want to talk about my experience in Saskatchewan schools over the last eight years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I do think . . . Kind of shifting out of my maiden speech into talking about the bill at hand. But the state of education deserves an emergency sitting, deserves to be discussed, because it's in crisis. And yet here we are talking about pronouns.

So I want to paint a little bit of a picture for folks in this room because when I . . . I left the classroom June 30th of 2023, three months ago. It's what I lived and breathed for eight months, or sorry, eight years. So the teacher, you pick up on students' learning habits. And through conversations with families and other teachers who have taught the students you get to see the gaps and the issues that students may have in their learning.

Now if I thought that a student had a learning disability that had kind of gone, you know, undetected or hadn't been tested, as the grade 6/7 teacher I could put forward that student to the list to be tested by our team of professionals — like a psychologist, a counsellor, other team members — and I would recommend that the student be tested. Now, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, parents would be involved in that conversation.

[18:00]

So now when I started teaching nine years ago, I would try to get the grade 6 students on the testing list in hopes that they would get tested in grade 7. So it was a hope that they would get tested by the next year. That's how much of a delay it is. Now last year, in my last year of teaching for the time being, I would recommend a student to be tested in grade 6 with the hope and prayer that they would get tested by grade 8 before they went into high school. That is the reality in Saskatchewan schools. There

was a two-year lag between the time we noticed a concern and the time that that kid would get an assessment. Not we would come up with all the solutions to help that learner, just get a diagnosis. It was unacceptable. And I don't understand how again the Education minister can stand up and say that there are ample supports for students in schools.

Two years ago — another example, Mr. Deputy Speaker — two years ago when I started at Grant Road School in the southern part of Regina, there was a large immigrant population in my school; 25 per cent of the school was new immigrants to Canada. We had a full English as an additional language teacher in our school two years ago. And this EAL [English as an additional language] teacher would pull students from each of the classrooms from kindergarten all the way up to grade 8. She'd pull them into her room in small groups or one on one and she would work with those kids, some of them who knew no English, no English at all. And the goal is to help them learn English in a more proficient, effective manner so that they can integrate into our classrooms easier. They can learn faster; they start to learn the content that we're teaching; and ultimately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, became an effective part of Saskatchewan's economy.

Now the second year that I was at Grant Road, the EAL teacher went down to part-time, not by their choosing, because of the budget cuts. So we now only had an EAL teacher in our school in the afternoons. Was that because of a drop of those students who needed help? Not at all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not at all. In fact it was quite opposite. We would get new refugee students in who could speak no English. And those students would just go into a regular classroom with 28, 29 students, with other needs in the classroom. And the teacher was expected to go above and beyond for that student to try and teach them English in grade 6 and 7. That's a reality of Saskatchewan schools across the board in this province. There are too many needs in the classroom for a teacher to support by themselves.

Let's talk about how public school is getting more expensive for families as this government off-loads fees and costs.

Outdoor education. I'll speak again about my experience in Regina Public. We have one of the best programs in Regina Public with the outdoor ed program, which is a long-standing program in the division. Again when I started back nine years ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was no cost for an outdoor education field trip. All teachers needed to do was sign up for one of the field trips. And you kind of went in and you sent them an email that said, I want to get in. And there was so many people who wanted those field trips. Sometimes you got them, sometimes you didn't.

But it was completely free, no cost to the student. And they'd have an employee, an interpreter, come to our classroom, give us a presentation before the field trip, and then we'd go on that field trip next day or next week. It was amazing. It was wonderfully equitable because community schools could utilize this, non-community schools could utilize this program, and these kids got to have these outdoor education field trips.

We would go to Fairy Hill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and explore the Nature Conservancy of Canada's wonderful property. We would go to Brown's Coulee, a private company that outdoor ed has had access to for decades to allow students to come out and explore

native prairie, you know, see buffalo rubs and beaver dams and leopard frogs. And these are the memories, these are the experiences that I'm sure everyone in this House can think back to when they were in school. And those experiences still last with them.

Now over the course of my eight years as a teacher, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they went from being no cost to then \$3 a student subsidized, and then \$6 subsidized, and then no dollars subsidized. And with inflation, the price of a school bus to take you outside of the city is now . . . When I was there last year, maybe it's gone up, but it was \$270 depending on your class size. That meant it was 9 to \$11 per student to go on that field trip now.

And what that's done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is it means that those community schools that are living in parts of this city, they don't get to go on those field trips anymore because they can't afford it. They can't ask their parents to pay for that because they can't afford it. So now only the schools that have parents who, you know, have enough financial stability to volunteer or do fundraising or draw fundraising drives, those schools still get to do it but not these community schools.

Let's talk about lunchroom. Again when I started there were no lunchroom fees. Now if you're in kindergarten it's \$55 in Regina Public to stay for lunch. It's \$110 per kid in elementary school, but the fees are capped at \$220 per family per year, Mr. Speaker. Whew.

And here's what's going on this year with lunchroom supervision. Last year when I was there, there was one classroom had one supervisor. The supervisor stayed in there. Again because of budget cuts, teachers who are supervising or EAs or even members of the public come in and they are now supervising three separate classrooms at once because they're only funding a half or a third of the number of lunchroom supervisors now.

So a supervisor literally goes into this classroom, looks at them, know anyone choking? Anyone throwing food? Everyone's good? And you know they're just going to be good, Mr. Speaker. There's going to be no tomfoolery going on in that classroom — grade 2s, grade 3s, grade 8s. Then they're going to go to the next classroom. Leave this classroom, go look in the next classroom. Check on them. No one's choking? Everyone's here? No one's run away? Because that happens. And then go to the third classroom and check on them. I wonder what's happening in the first and second classroom. Better go check. It's wild, Mr. Speaker, but that's the reality in Saskatchewan schools today.

Here's another one, Mr. Speaker. I want to poll the Assembly if they want to play. How hot did it get in my school in one of the classrooms last spring, Mr. Speaker? How hot? We have no air conditioning. No air conditioning. Now I'll give some hints. There's 28 kids in the classroom. This is just some context so you can kind of, you know, get your guess in a little bit tighter here. Twenty-eight students in the classroom. There's five fans going in the classroom. The blinds are closed. The lights are off. How hot did it get in the classroom? 25? 32? 31? What? 35? Anyone on the other side want to throw a guess in?

It was 34 degrees in a grade 2/3 classroom. Anyone on the other

side wants to see the photograph of the thermometer in the teacher's classroom? I can get you that — 34 degrees. Literally kids are going home throughout the day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with heat exhaustion over the course of those days. That's the reality in Saskatchewan schools today.

I'll give one more. This past year at my school, there was . . . Students who have exceptionally high needs in terms of focusing or behaviours may get an educational assistant to work with them. Sometimes it's one on one. Sometimes it's just for part of the day, maybe the morning. It all depends on how many kids, how many needs, all of that.

So halfway through the year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a student who's getting one-on-one full-day EA support. So this kid needs an EA every day, all day to accomplish anything, to do any learning. And a lot of that is just like behaviour modification — they're not doing well; we're going to take him out, go for a walk, all that kind of stuff. But this student had an EA for full-time.

Halfway through the year, we get word that a new student is coming into our school, and this student is deemed to have higher needs than the student who has a full-time EA currently. There was no new EAs in our school. There was no new funding in our school because of this student.

The solution was that they took the EA from the kid who needed the one-on-one EA support and gave it to the other kid. And the kid who originally had one-on-one support didn't have an EA anymore. It was back on the teacher's responsibility. So the student went from one-on-one EA support in the classroom to none, because someone with more needs came into the school and they just moved it over. This is the state of Saskatchewan schools.

We've heard, you know, about counsellors. And the government's numbers show that there is one counsellor to 3,000 students. That's the average. And that's gotten worse over my career. Sorry, I'm sounding like a broken record here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I started eight years ago and when I ended has been very different.

And how the counsellor piece works was, we had a counsellor at our school for one day a week. One day a week. So hopefully the kid who was in crisis that day was in crisis on the day the counsellor was there. Because what would happen is, the kid would come to me. Something's going on at home. They're having anxiety. Something is happening with their friends. They need to talk about something with the counsellor.

I would say, okay. Is this like a crisis that we need to phone the counsellor at another school to talk to you about? Or can this wait for like four more days until they're here? That was the conversation I would have. No, this is serious; we need to deal with this today. Okay, let me go talk to the principal and I'll see if we can contact the counsellor who's currently at another school dealing with the other students at the other school who need support, who only get that counsellor once a week.

So again, when this government talks that there's ample mental health supports for students in schools, it's laughable.

Now we're here to talk about Bill No. 137, *An Act to amend The Education Act, 1995 respecting parental rights*. And as you can imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from what I've already said, this is a personal one for me because I've lived this for the last eight years.

[18:15]

Being a grade 6/7 teacher, the curriculum in grade 6/7 is talking about puberty. It's talking about blood-borne infections like HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] and hepatitis C. It's talking about gender identity. And so I've been teaching this stuff that is in the Saskatchewan curriculum, the Government of Saskatchewan's school curriculum, for eight years. And to have the government, you know, torque the way . . . torque the message of how this content is taught in schools, is really frustrating.

You know, is it inappropriate for a young girl to learn about menstruation before she starts menstruating? Is it inappropriate for students to learn about sexually transmitted infections before they start engaging in sexual activity? Is it inappropriate for a student to learn about gender identity and sexual orientation when they start experiencing sexual urges because of puberty? Is that inappropriate? And yet what we hear from the government about what's being taught in schools sure makes it sound like it is.

For the government to suggest that parents are not being communicated about what's happening in schools around this . . . I don't know. I feel really passionate about this. In my classroom, for eight years, I would always send a permission letter home or send an email home saying, hey, we're going to start talking about sexual health; it's in the curriculum. If you want to look at the curriculum, here's the website. You can look it up and see what's in the curriculum. Anyone can. Just google "Saskatchewan curriculum."

I'd send that email. I would say to parents, Mr. Deputy Speaker, hey, this is a great opportunity for you to talk to your kids about your family values, about what matters to you and your family about their sexual health. Use this as a springboard to have conversations at the dinner table about what they're learning in health class. This is not happening behind closed doors, and all scary and weird.

On the first day of school, as a teacher, I give parents my email and I say, email me at any time if you have a question or concern about what's going on in our classroom. There were instances where I gave my personal cell phone to parents so they could communicate with me at any time. And I would get text messages at 9:30 at night on my own time, and I would respond to them. Good communication. It's happening in schools.

But again, based on what I hear from the government, is that it's not. Sure, if there are concerns, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that parents don't feel informed about, you know, sexual health stuff being presented? Sure, let's have a conversation about that. You can, I'm sure, discuss with the school and the division to make that better, and that communication better. Do we require an emergency sitting to bring all of us back here to make that happen? I don't know.

All right. The other thing that I wanted to say is the fact that, the reason I sent that letter or that email to parents before I started sexual health education in my classroom was to let them know what's going on, but also if they wanted to withdraw their kid from my class for that period of time, they could. And that happened. So what's at issue is, why are we here in an emergency sitting to make it happen?

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to just reference the *Deepening the Discussion* document — *Gender and Sexual Diversity* — that the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education published in 2015. This is the Government of Saskatchewan logos on the front here so I'm . . . This is a document that's shared with divisions to help teachers and schools to understand better about these issues around sexual health, around gender identity, sexual orientation. And I want to go through some of this today, because I think it's important. And this is the government's document from 2015 that they were encouraging teachers on things to use over the last, I don't know, what, eight years now.

And so let's dive into this a little. On the . . . I don't have any page numbers, so I apologize to Hansard. But it's in the document here. It starts on one of the pages around human rights, and it says:

Students who experience discrimination, whether it is based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, or culture, have a legal right to be safe and protected in schools.

Unless we use the notwithstanding clause to override those rights. Maybe they should amend that.

Human rights laws prohibit discrimination based on an individual's gender identity, sexual preference, and/or sexual orientation. Words, actions, or pictures that ridicule, scorn, mock, intimidate, or otherwise threaten any individual because of their gender or sexual orientation or preference may constitute discrimination.

Canada is a country that values equality and human rights. These values and aspirations and rights have been articulated in many documents.

They go on to list the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, the Criminal Code of Canada, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*, and even the Saskatchewan education Act of 1995 that we're here to amend.

Individuals have the right to dignity and equality under the human rights code.

This is the government's document that says here, that:

Individuals have the right to dignity and equality under the human rights code. Because human rights are so important . . .

Listen to this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in their document here:

Because human rights are so important, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* takes precedence over other provincial laws.

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission's mission is to promote and protect the individual dignity, fundamental freedoms, and equal rights of Saskatchewan's citizens.

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code protects human rights and prohibits discrimination. In Saskatchewan, it is against the law to discriminate because of sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the government's own document. And so I'm confused as to why they aren't following this document.

In addition, if a school legitimately needs and collects personal information that either directly or indirectly identifies a person's sex as being different from their gender identity, the school must ensure that the individual's privacy is protected and the information is kept confidential.

That's from the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 2013. The school must ensure that the individual's privacy is protected and the information is kept confidential.

I want to read a little story here. It's called *Saskatchewan Voices* from the ministry's *Deepening the Discussion* document:

Last summer, I was heading into Regina and I drove down a gravel road. I came across a young man walking on the side of the road. I recognized this young person from our community. Today he was dressed in jeans, a skirt, and he was wearing makeup and nail polish. I stopped and offered him a ride and I asked where he was going. He looked upset and he replied, "Anywhere but here. I don't belong in the community; everyone judges me and they don't accept me for who I am." I told him that I was going to the city and asked him if he would like a ride.

We talked all the way to the city. As we spoke, I remembered that the young man used to work for me. He commented that back then, he always felt safe with me. I realized that he felt safe because he could always talk to me. I treated him as an individual, with acceptance and respect. I accepted him for who he was. The young man knew as a young child that he was different. He had always liked to dress in girls' clothing and he liked to wear makeup.

Once we arrived in the city, I took the young man to an organization I was aware of that supports young people in vulnerable circumstances. I knew the staff at the centre would take him in and support him, and they did just that.

As I was driving back home, I thought about this young man's situation and I wondered what I could do in our community to support him and others who might be struggling with their identity and sense of belonging.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about, what is gender identity? This is something that I've taught in my school, in my classroom, for eight years and it's right here in the *Deepening the Discussion* . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I hate to interrupt but we do have a guest in here. I just want to remind the guest, you're not allowed to use your phone or anything in here. Okay, thank you.

Mr. Clarke: — I want to just chat a little bit about what these things are because I've had, over the years, a lot of conversations with people who don't really quite understand it. And I thought I would take an opportunity to share some of the information that is right here in *Deepening the Discussion*.

So we have some different terms that I'm going to use, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have gender identity. We have gender expression. We have sexual orientation, and then we have biological sex.

So let's start with biological sex. Biological sex is basically the genitals that a person is born with, the hormones and the chromosomes that you have in your body when you are born. Oftentimes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's seen as a binary, so you're either male or you're female.

But I'm wondering if folks in this Chamber know about intersex people. These are individuals who are born with some parts of the genitals of both sexes. So maybe they have a penis and scrotum and ovaries. Maybe they don't find this out until they go to try and have a child and they are infertile, and they do an ultrasound and they realize this. But one to three people out of 100 are intersex, one to three out of 100. And so right there, it's not binary.

[18:30]

What about people with XXY chromosomes? All of a sudden it becomes a lot more grey. So that's biological sex. So you're born with a biological sex, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Let's move to gender identity. Gender identity is the sense in your mind, in your head, about who you think you are. Okay? Maybe also in your heart, who you know yourself to be. That's your gender identity. Now if your gender identity matches your biological sex, you would be termed cisgender. So that means it all matches up. If you are born with one biological sex and you self-identify your gender identity is different, you would be considered transgender.

Now there's male and female, and there's nonbinary, so if you don't feel maybe like either. And I would argue that it has a lot to do with the hormones that are going through your body, right? Both male and female individuals and intersex people have both male and female hormones coursing through their body all the time. Except if you're, you know, if you have a lot of testosterone, you will act and grow one way. If you have a lot of estrogen, you will act and you will develop another way. And if you have a little bit of both, it affects how you feel about yourself.

Now the last term around gender, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is gender expression. So gender expression is how you present to other people. Okay? So this is how I dress, or this is how I wear makeup, or this is how I do my hair, or this is how I talk or I act. This is part of your gender expression.

Now that is different from your sexual orientation. Your sexual orientation is who you are attracted to. That could be people of the same sex; it could be people of the opposite sex. It could be pansexual, so you're attracted to . . . it doesn't matter what gender they are, you're attracted to them. Or you may not be attracted to anyone.

So those are the different pieces of this. Now what I think is so interesting about gender is that this is taught to us, this is reinforced to us in so many different ways, whether it's the toys that you play with as a child, it's the colours, it's the attitudes, it's the activities, it's the bathrooms, it's the clothes, it's the behaviours.

Here's one that . . . I always think this one is so fascinating, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I used to share this podcast with my students as we were talking about gender. And it was *Under the Influence* by Terry O'Reilly on CBC. And this is "Summer Series — Guys and Dolls: Gender Marketing." So it's a marketing podcast, a marketing show. And he talks about all sorts of different things, but this one is on the marketing of gender.

Now when I say what are the colours for male and female, what are the colours that represent each of those things? Anyone on my side of the . . . Pink and blue, thank you. Pink and blue. Where did that come from? I mean this is so ingrained in our society today that girls wear pink and boys wear blue. Right. And the big gender reveal, and it's the colour that's going to tell you what biological sex — not gender of the kid, what biological sex — the baby is going to be.

But where did that come from, that ingrained societal norm? What's wrong? It came from a department store, Mr. Speaker. A department store. For centuries small children wore white because when they threw up or they soiled their clothes, people bleached them. And so they wore white. Until a department store decided that it wanted people to buy more stuff.

So before World War I, before World War II, a department store declared that pink was for boys and blue was for girls, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it was considered pink was the stronger colour, therefore more fitting for a boy. Blue was considered a delicate, more feminine colour for a girl. And then World War II happens, and arbitrarily, arbitrarily a department store flips it.

And the idea was that like if you had a baby boy, you would have to buy blue clothes for your baby. And then if you had a baby girl, you couldn't put your girl in the blue clothes; you had to buy new clothes, the pink clothes, so that the baby girl would have the pink clothes. And yet this is a gender norm that is so entrenched in our society that came to be because a department store wanted to sell more stuff.

Now, I am going to jump ahead. Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we're here talking about this bill, you know, I wanted to demystify a bit about what's happening in schools around the sexual health curriculum and around the health curriculum in general. I'm wondering at what point do we . . . So a couple of questions I have on the bill is that at least two weeks before the sexual health content is presented to pupils, the family, I think, needs to be informed by the principal, which I thought was interesting. Why the principal, when it's the teacher teaching it? So it just seems weird to have that extra layer of administration or bureaucracy there.

So a lot of times in my class, and I know in every other class, you don't have a set schedule when you start the school year. You don't have every lesson plan made for every day of the year, and every day you just open that book up and just go. It's rather, hey, this is going to take an extra day. We're going to push back what

we had planned for tomorrow. And so I do see problems in terms of, you know, when we start talking about sexual health. But I guess you could email and then say, hey, it's going to happen soon.

But again, why are we involving the principal in it? At what point, at what grade do we start emailing parents home about this? It doesn't explain that in the bill.

Because I hear from people that, you know, they don't want kindergarten kids and grade 1 kids learning about sexual health. I hear that one. But I thought I would just reference what is taught in health class in grade 1 so that everyone in the Chamber knows what's going on.

So just to give you some perspective here, there are outcomes, which is the big idea that a teacher has to teach about. And then there are indicators, which are things that the teacher could do to help teach that outcome.

So in grade 1, because they don't really have, they don't have different classes per se or different subject matter. In kindergarten it's a holistic kind of look or kind of view in how we approach curriculum, but let's start in grade 1.

So one of the first outcomes here is:

Examine healthy behaviours and opportunities and begin to determine how these behaviours and opportunities may affect personal well-being.

So some of the indicators of how a teacher could accomplish this would include:

- (a) Use common and respectful language to talk about healthy behaviours.
- (b) Communicate observations of what healthy and unhealthy looks like, sounds like, and feels like.
- (c) Ask questions and seek answers about healthy/unhealthy behaviour and opportunities.
- (d) Recognize that making healthy choices can be difficult at times.

I like this one.

(e) Illustrate the importance of basic daily behaviours — washing hands, brushing teeth, eating fruits and vegetables, wearing sunscreen and sun-protective clothing, being physically active, playing, drinking water, respecting other living things — for good health.

I'm going to drink some water now.

- (f) Determine the daily healthy behaviours that can be performed individually and those that may need support: washing hands on your own, applying sunscreen with support, smudging with support.
- (g) Recognize daily opportunities for demonstrating healthy behaviours: drinking water as a thirst quencher, walking on

the sidewalk, flossing teeth, helping others.

(h) Discuss a variety of healthy behaviours over which one has control, e.g. brushing teeth, being active, engaging in quiet time, seeking shade.

That was the first outcome, Mr. Speaker.

The second outcome that's covered in grade 1:

Determine, with support, the importance of the brain, heart, and lungs, and examine behaviours that keep these organs healthy.

- (a) Use common and accurate language to talk about the brain, heart, and lungs.
- (b) Identify where the heart, brain, and lungs are located.
- (c) Recognize that the heart is a pump about the size of a clenched fist.
- (d) Feel and describe the sensation of one's heart beating, i.e. the chest, the neck, or the wrist while standing still and after physical activity.
- (e) Establish that blood is pumped through the body by the heart.
- (f) Identify that people have two lungs.
- (g) Illustrate the sensation of lungs filling with air.

So far we haven't reached anything I don't think is too controversial.

USC 1.3 Analyze, with support, feelings and behaviours that are important for nurturing healthy relationships at school.

Use common and . . . [This is the indicator, sorry.] Use common and respectful language to talk about feelings, e.g. happy, angry, scared. Talk about actions, e.g. smiling, crying, crossing arms. And relationships: friendships, co-operation, communication.

- (b) Illustrate what particular feelings sound like, look like, feel like.
- (c) Recognize that individuals make choices about how to express their feelings.
- (d) Observe and communicate observations about how the school staff and students treat each other.
- (e) Recognize that people have numerous kinds of relationships, e.g. family, friends, trusted adults, neighbours, and teammates.
- (f) Illustrate what being a good friend looks like, sounds like, feels like, e.g. sharing, caring, co-operating, listening, and supporting.

There's more indicators here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I'll jump to the next one, the next outcome:

Determine and practise safe pedestrian/street behaviours and examine related safety challenges in the community.

Use common and respectful language to talk about pedestrian . . . [This is the indicator (a)] and street safety, e.g. danger, risk; stop, look, and listen.

(b) Examine what is meant by danger, i.e. harmful consequences.

(c) Observe and identify safe/unsafe practices in own family and community.

(e) Discuss what is meant by "risk," i.e. state of uncertainty where some of the possibilities involve a loss, danger, or harm.

USC 1.5 Explore the association between a healthy sense of self and one's positive connection with others and the environment.

(a) Use common and respectful language to talk about self and others, e.g. appearance, abilities, gender, behaviours, culture.

(b) Recognize self as an individual who has a particular physical and inherited attribute, e.g. height, freckles; and particular experiences that may or may not be similar to those of others, e.g. traditions.

[18:45]

(c) Identify factors that influence one's sense of self.

DM 1.1 Examine initial steps . . .

I should say, there are a number of more indicators. I'll save the members opposite from having to listen to all of them. This outcome:

DM 1.1 Examine initial steps, i.e. stop, think, do, for making basic choices regarding healthy behaviours; healthy brain, heart, and lungs; healthy relationships; pedestrian/street safety; and a healthy sense of self.

Indicators:

(a) Recall routine daily choices and discuss how these choices were made.

(b) Examine and record simple ways self and others make routine healthy choices.

And the last outcome in grade 1 is:

AP 1.1 Apply the steps of stop, think, and do, with guidance, to develop healthy behaviours related to a healthy brain, heart, and lungs; healthy relationships; pedestrian safety, street safety; and a healthy sense of self.

Indicators are:

(a) Review the healthy choices for which individuals have control.

(b) Practice the steps of stop, think, and do, in a variety of situations and contexts.

So in grade 2, let's jump up to grade 2. The outcome:

USC 2.1 Demonstrate a basic understanding of how thoughts, feelings, and actions influence health and well-being.

(a) Develop a common understanding and use of respectful language to talk about thoughts, feelings, and actions, e.g. emotions, ideas, behaviours, choices, reactions, control.

We still haven't hit anything that seems too controversial, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(b) Examine daily habits/routines that are healthy/unhealthy, e.g. eating breakfast/skipping breakfast, recycling/littering.

(c) Investigate and illustrate how particular thoughts — e.g. I am good at, I can do as good as she can — makes one feel.

There's more that I'll skip.

The second outcome:

Determine how healthy snacking practices influence personal health.

I hope the folks who are watching on the legislative website are not thinking, dang, this guy's a bad teacher. He's boring.

An Hon. Member: — Well you're not allowed props here.

Mr. Clarke: — Well that's right. There'd be so many props.

USC 2.2 Determine how healthy snacking practices influence personal health.

USC 2.3 Develop an understanding of how health may be affected by illness and disease.

(a) Develop a common understanding and use of respectful language to talk about illness and disease, e.g. germs, medicine, vaccinations, symptoms, treatment, contagious, infectious.

(b) Describe what being sick looks like, sounds like, and feels like, e.g. fatigue, loss of appetite, aches, absent from school and activities, sad.

(c) Describe how particular illness may be transmitted, e.g. air — through coughing and sneezing; direct contact — kissing; can be transmitted between feces like animals' or humans'; blood products — touching a used needle.

USC 2.4

There were more there, but I'm just going to continue going through.

Examine social and personal meanings of “respect” and establish ways to show respect for self, persons, living things, possessions, and the environment.

USC 2.5 Recognize potential safety risks in community play areas and determine safe practices/behaviours to identify, assess, and reduce the risk.

(a) Develop a common understanding and use of respectful language to talk about risk, e.g. identify, assess, avoid, reduce, consequence.

(b) Examine expected behaviours and general safety rules in community play areas like parks, playgrounds, school grounds.

(c) Inventory personal habits with respect to safety in community play areas.

(d) Demonstrate healthy behaviours — e.g. taking turns, wearing a seatbelt, asking for help — that favours the safety of self and others.

(f) Discuss how safety rules/guidelines are established to reduce risk.

How are you doing, Mr. Member from Regina Rosemont? Here we go:

USC 2.6 Examine how communities benefit from the diversity of their individual community members.

(a) [This is an indicator]. Investigate what it means to be special and unique, e.g. families, interests, talents, culture, gifts, faith, feelings, desires, learning, learning styles, confidence, and appearances.

(b) Develop an awareness of community as a group of people who interact, work, and play together; face challenges and solve problems together; and help each other.

(c) Develop awareness of differences in routine, practices, and/or preferences among people.

(d) Understand and respect individual preferences, including those related to traditions, dress, and play.

(e) Understand that different does not mean better or worse.

Outcome DM 2.1 Demonstrate how, why, and when to ask for help and/or advice when discovering healthy relationships related to thoughts, feelings, actions; healthy snacking; effects of illness/disease; respect; safety; and diversity.

There are a number of indicators here:

(a) Examine the concept of “advice” and “help,” and develop the abilities to ask for both.

(b) Determine safety supports — teachers, peers, elders, bus driver, significant and trusted adults — in the community.

And the last one in grade 2:

AP 2.1 Act upon health-related understandings, skills, and confidences to make healthy connections related to personal thoughts, feelings, actions; healthy snacking; effects of illness/disease; respect; safety; and diversity.

So I haven't seen anything in here, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to suggest anything nefarious is going on in the Saskatchewan curriculum. But that's just me.

We're moving into grade 3. Moving on up.

USC 3.1 Determine the role of variety of healthy foods and physical activity on the health and development of the mind, body, and immune system.

Indicators

(a) Investigate the basic role of the immune system, i.e. to fight illness and/or infection.

(b) Develop common and respectful language to talk about immunity, e.g. germs, virus, vaccinations, antibodies.

(c) Predict and then investigate what happens if the immune system is not healthy and not working properly.

There are more going on; it's much of the same.

(g) Determine that foods provide essential nutrients for health. See introduction to Canada's Food Guide.

USC 3.2 Examine the spiritual dimension of the inner self and determine the importance of nurturing it.

(a) Explore and discuss ideas and questions which are of particular importance/interest but cannot be easily understood, e.g. why do we dream? What happens to pets after they die?

(b) Investigate common definitions of the inner self, e.g. quiet awareness of who one really is and one's reason for being.

(c) Develop respectful language sometimes used to describe the inner self, e.g. the soul or the spirit.

(d) Determine the inner self as the centre of thoughts and feeling that guide/influence personal behaviour.

(e) Examine and respond to stories that include depictions of spirit and soul.

I'm really sorry, Mr. Hansard Man, for my inconsistency of saying (a), (b), and (c). Thank you for all you do.

Outcome USC 3.3 Determine how the misuse of helpful and the use of harmful substances, including tobacco, affect the health of self and others.

- (a) Develop common respectful language often used to talk about substances, e.g. tobacco, vitamins, medicine, drugs.
- (b) Reflect on what is believed or known to be healthy and/or unhealthy regarding substances.
- (c) Examine common misconceptions — e.g. alcohol is not a drug — regarding substance use and abuse.
- (d) Identify and respond to, with guidance, information about helpful and harmful substances, including medicines, vitamins, drugs, tobacco, and food.
- (e) Clarify the difference between ceremonial tobacco within First Nations and Métis culture and the commercial recreational use of tobacco.

USC 3.4 Understand what it means to contribute to the health of self, family, and home.

Indicator

- (a) Develop common and respectful language often used to talk about families, e.g. kinship, parents, caregivers, siblings.
- (b) Investigate various definitions of home, e.g. a place where one lives with other family members.
- (c) Observe and reflect on the kinds of communication in the home and its impact on the health of the family.

This one . . . Whew.

- (d) Become aware of the diversity in families, e.g. two parents, single-parent, foster parent, extended family, same-sex.

There are other families that exist besides the one that you grow up in. That's wild.

USC 3.5 Evaluate safe behaviours, practices to increase the safety of self and others while at home.

- (a) Review the meaning of risk.
- (b) Recognize and describe potential safety risks, including chemicals, poisons, vehicles, machinery, electricity, fires, second-hand smoke, uncomfortable situations at home, i.e. in the house, apartment, or in the yard.

It goes on. There's a number more indicators, but I'll just skip ahead because we're only in grade 3 yet. We've got a long way to go. If you want to head home, you can. I'm talking to my mom.

USC 3.6 Distinguish between examples of real violence, e.g. schoolyard fights, shaking a baby, bullying; and fictional violence, e.g. cartoons, world wrestling entertainment, video games; and determine the influence of both on health and well-being.

So the indicators here:

- (a) Develop a common and respectful language often used to talk about violence and abuse.
- (b) Reflect on what is known or believed about violence in communities.
- (c) Determine that violence can be physical, emotional, and/or sexual.

Which is important.

- (d) Describe types of violence and abuse, including physical, e.g. punching and kicking; sexual, e.g. inappropriate touching; and emotional, e.g. name calling, exclusion, cyberbullying.

These all seem reasonable to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

- (e) Recognize that physical, sexual, and emotional violence are behaviours that hurt and destroy people, places, or things.

Outcome DM 3.1 Demonstrate the importance of investigating information for making informed decisions related to healthy foods and physical activity, one's inner self, helpful and harmful substances, healthy family and healthy home, safety at home, and impact of violence.

[19:00]

Indicators:

- (a) Critique decisions made by someone, e.g. community situation, character in a story, who did not investigate the information/facts before making a decision, and compare it to those made by people who did.
- (b) Determine the kinds of information to gather and investigate for making healthy decisions.
- (c) Examine the sources of information/misinformation in the community.

And the last one in grade 3 is:

Use the understandings, skills, and confidences related to healthy foods and physical activity, one's inner self, helpful and harmful substances, healthy family and home, safety at home, and impact of violence.

That's grade 3, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm going to go to grade 4, and then I'm going to switch gears a little bit. And then I'm going to come back to 6, 7, 8, 9.

I had planned on tabling 47 quizzes for members opposite, but given the reaction to my colleague who was going to table the child advocate report, I decided not to do that, no.

So we'll do grade 4, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Grade 4:

USC 4.1 Assess what healthy eating and physical activity mean for preadolescence.

Indicators:

(a) Examine personal, past, and present knowledge about healthy eating and physical activity, e.g. exercise as important to health, trends such as jogging and home gyms, females and exercise/sports.

I don't know what that means.

(b) Investigate personal, family, community, and cultural factors that influence healthy eating, e.g. time, serving, size, cultural food practices and values, water consumption, and access to healthy foods.

The rest of the indicators are much of the same.

USC 4.2 Illustrate how both traditional healing, including First Nations and Métis practices, and current Western medical advances have influenced the prevention and/or management of past and present health challenges, including mental health/illness, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, and diabetes.

So we're getting into grade 4 here:

Indicators:

(a) Investigate and distinguish points of view expressed about health opportunities and challenges, both past and present, e.g. management of illness/disease, tobacco legislation, obesity.

(b) Categorize, compare a variety of health challenges as short-term and long-term — e.g. depression — and as serious and not serious, e.g. HIV and AIDS.

(c) Explain how the mind, body, and spirit may be affected by health challenges, e.g. irritability, fatigue, motivation, depression.

USC 4.3 Examine healthy interpersonal skills and determine strategies to effectively develop new relationships and/or negotiate disagreements in relationships.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the indicators here:

(a) Compare qualities of healthy and unhealthy relationships and determine the connections of these relationships to a healthy mind, body, and spirit.

(b) Describe and recommend healthy behaviours, including positive communication skills for getting along with others in play and competitive situations, e.g. an appreciation of silence as an opportunity to reflect and refrain from jumping in, analyzing and criticizing ideas and how not the people offering them.

Maybe the members in the Assembly need to review that on both sides of the House perhaps.

(c) Recognize how various factors, including peer pressure, communication skills, and assumptions affect relationships.

(e) Determine healthy ways to relate to peers not in personal circle of friends.

I've got a few more here and then we'll switch gears, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

USC 4.4 Determine basic responsibility for safety and protection in various environments/situations.

(a) Examine prior knowledge and new information related to safety, including cyber-safety.

(b) Explore critical safety needs — e.g. cyber, hunting, water, fire, biking — of self and others in local community.

(c) Investigate common personal and community activities/environments to identify those that involve greater safety risks.

It goes on talking about the same kind of things for a number more of the indicators.

USC 4.5 Examine how identity, i.e. self-concept, self-esteem, self-determination, is influenced by relationships that are formed with others.

Indicators:

(a) Observe and investigate ways that others define and value self, and learn ways to help others know one more fully and positively, e.g. ask questions, share stories, offer to help.

I think to reflect on that piece could be helpful in this situation when we're talking about this bill. You know, I would implore members opposite to ask questions, to listen to the stories that we've shared here in the Assembly over the last two days. And take offers of help to make this a better piece of legislation for Saskatchewan people.

(b) Investigate information and definitions of self-concept, i.e. thoughts one has about self; self-esteem, e.g. a feeling of pride in itself; and self-determination, i.e. the right to make own choices; to develop an understanding of identity.

(c) Examine identity as being related to how one feels on the inside and how one chooses to define self in relation to personal qualities, characteristics, and cultural definitions.

(g) Describe examples of positive and negative peer influence on self-concept, self-esteem, and self-determination.

USC 4.6 Assess healthy stress management strategies, e.g. relaxation skills, stress control skills, guided imagery, expressing feelings, and exercises.

(a) Develop and use respectful language to talk about stress, e.g. grief, loss, fear, expectations; and to describe the intensity of feelings, e.g. rating skill or a thermometer of 1 to 10.

(b) Communicate an informed personal understanding of

stress, reaction of worry, and/or preoccupation.

So again, I'll do this one last one and then I'll speak to this.

DM 4.1 Investigate the importance of personal responsibility and communication in making informed decisions related to healthy eating and physical activity; prevention, management of health challenges; negotiating disagreements; safety and protection; personal identity; and stressors.

So again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll just reiterate that the outcomes are the ideas, the concepts that are being taught in schools; the indicators are ways that teachers can accomplish teaching those outcomes. And in everything that I have touched on so far from grade 1 to grade 4, there has been nothing about sex, about anything really inappropriate. Talking about healthy relationships; behaviours that are healthy; learning about the body, like the lungs and the heart.

So again there's a lot of misconceptions about what's being taught around health class in Saskatchewan schools. This is the curriculum. This is what professional teachers take and use to teach in the classroom. I'm sorry that this is a little dry, but I think it's important information for everyone in this Assembly to have so they know what's happening in Saskatchewan schools.

Okay, I'm going to switch it up a little bit, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'll switch gears here, and I want to go back to the bill. I talked in my opening remarks about how the trans community in Canada according to Statistics Canada is 0.79 per cent of the Canadian population. And so we can assume that that's the same in schools, so less than 1 per cent.

And within that 0.79 per cent you have trans kids, trans people living in homes that are supportive. And that's amazing. But for a small fraction, a small portion of that 0.79 per cent, some of those homes may not be supportive. And we heard letters today that talked about the abuse that some people who wrote in in those letters experienced in their home, their real-life experience. And so I think it's naive to say that all homes in this province are safe for kids.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the issue of this bill that the government doesn't seem to appreciate. That is our opposition to this bill, is that what happens if the parents of a transgender youth is told that they are transgender and the parents are not supportive? I'll say that again. What happens if a family is told that a child is transgender and they are not supportive? The child is at risk. The child is at risk.

And let's call a spade a spade. This bill only targets those trans kids. If trans kids live in a home where they're talking about gender identity, where the kids feel safe, then this bill doesn't matter to them because the family already knows.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the gallery earlier this week, we had folks here from Lulu's Lodge. Lulu's Lodge is run by the John Howard Society. They were here in the gallery. And I want to read an article that was published by CBC back in December 29, 2020 that talks about Lulu's Lodge. And the title of this article is: "Lulu's Lodge provides safe space for Regina LGBTQ2S youth facing homelessness."

So for 99.2 per cent of Saskatchewan children, this bill doesn't matter because they're not questioning their gender identity. They're not using different pronouns. They're not using different names. So for 0.79 per cent of kids, who are transgender, a portion of them are going to be in supportive homes. Those families already know their new pronouns. Those families already know those new names. So we're talking about a portion of the school population that is less than 0.79 per cent.

And the folks from Lulu's Lodge, who sat in this gallery, work at Lulu's Lodge. And I'm going to read the article:

[19:15]

It's not uncommon for many of the youth who come to Lulu's Lodge to have to leave their own home because they are not accepted for who they are.

So where in the legislation, in this bill, do we protect those kids? And that's the opposition here. What have we gained by outing these kids to non-supportive families if they end up homeless? Is this the parental engagement that the government is hoping for?

The first line of this article says:

The reason why LGBTQ2S youth face homelessness in Regina is usually because they are rejected by their own families. "We've had people actually flee a home before because it was unsafe," said Tanna Young, the director of Lulu's Lodge [who was here in the gallery].

Launched in 2018, Lulu's Lodge is a transitional home for LGBTQ2S individuals between the ages of 16 and 21 who are facing homelessness. The home is run by the Regina branch of the John Howard Society of Saskatchewan. Young said the home has had a 90 per cent occupancy rate since it opened and has at times had a wait-list.

This was published on December 29th, 2020.

It's not uncommon for many of the youth who come to Lulu's Lodge to have to leave their own home because they are not accepted for who they are. Young said statistics on how many homeless youth are LGBTQ2S are hard to come by because someone may not be out at the time that they are homeless. A 2017 book published by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and A Way Home Canada found that 40 per cent of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ2S.

Forty per cent of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ2S [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning, and two-spirit], but they only make up 10 per cent of the population. So what does that tell you? A lot of those kids who are homeless, as the article says, are usually there because they were rejected by their own families.

So I ask again, what have we gained, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by outing these kids if it means that they are going to be homeless?

I mean we're with you all the way in parental engagement. We want parents more involved. And my experience as a grade 6/7 teacher for eight years is that the kids who are falling through the

cracks, the kids who are not doing well in school are the ones who don't have parental engagement generally. Let's engage parents. Let's make them able to engage in their child's learning. This bill is not that.

Lulu's Lodge also helps youth with resources in the community such as doctors, and also has a mentor who stays overnight at the home and is there for the youth if they need someone to talk to. "The whole purpose of the home itself is to create a safe, inclusive space for LGBTQ people and to create that sense of community that for a lot of them they never had before," said Young.

Young described what LGBTQ2S homeless youth are facing as "compounded marginalization." Being homeless is enough of a challenge, but then there are the added issues that come with being LGBTQ2S such as mental health and suicide.

Since it started, Lulu's Lodge has received no government funding. [Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm reading here.] Caseworkers with John Howard Society work with youth who stay there, but Young said that work is being done on top of their regular caseloads. John Howard Society has applied for provincial and federal grants in the past but was rejected. Young said government officials realize the need, but funding the Lulu is hard to justify because it serves a smaller population of clients than other shelters.

Now I will concede that this article is from 2020, so I don't know the state of things at Lulu's Lodge currently. I'm told from our critic for Mental Health and Addictions there's still no funding from the government.

The society just recently received a small amount of funding through a COVID-19 response grant. That has allowed John Howard Society to dedicate a caseworker to the house but it's only temporary.

Lulu's Lodge has been able to keep running all this time thanks to the generosity from the community. After renting a home for some time, the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation provided the lodge with the means to purchase its first home. The local LGBTQ2S community has also played a large role in supporting the home. They've helped to keep the doors open essentially, said Young.

Terry Vanmackelberg, [who was here with the Lulu's Lodge delegation] who performs as a local drag queen named Flo Mingo, has been a dedicated supporter of Lulu's Lodge. Before the pandemic, Mackelberg hosted a monthly drag show which raised money for the home. Over the past two years, Mackelberg has raised approximately 35,000 for Lulu's Lodge.

Lulu's Lodge just recently lost one of its most staunch supporters in the LGBTQ2S community, Derek Seitz, who performed as a local drag queen . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Seitz, thank you. Seitz, who performed as a local drag queen named Jenny Talia passed away on December 8th. Seitz frequently served as a mentor at the home. He was almost the heart of Lulu's Lodge. He was involved in all my fundraising efforts, said Mackelberg.

Mackelberg said a home for LGBTQ2S youth is essential because they need services and counselling that regular youth experiencing homelessness may not need. If I would have come out of the closet as a youth, I would have been homeless as well and on the streets, and there was no Lulu's Lodge back then. And just because of your gender, your sexuality, how you identify should not put you on the streets and you should not be forced to live on the streets because of who you are, said Mackelberg.

That's the end of the article.

So again I would implore the members opposite to really consider that this bill will result in more homeless queer youth. That's not hyperbole. That's real. It's happening before this bill was passed, and it will continue to happen after this bill, but we fear based on the testimonials and letters that we've heard from more and more, that have been read over the course of these last couple days, that this is real. And that's the piece, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's why we're doing what we're doing, why we're standing up and saying these kids don't deserve to be homeless.

You know we went, my wife and I went to Walk the Walk earlier this year, where my colleague, member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre, was a performer as part of that drag show. And it was about raising funds for Lulu's Lodge. And I've got to say it was the first time I've been, and I'm really glad that I went because just the feeling of community that was in that venue that evening. And people were there to raise money to support homeless queer youth.

And there were members from our side of the House there. I mentioned the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre was performing in it, but there were others who attended with me, and there were also former members from the government side who were there. Last year's winner was the former MLA for Regina Coronation Park.

An Hon. Member: — Docherty.

Mr. Clarke: — Mark Docherty. I can say it, you know.

I got an email, and all of the MLAs in this Assembly received this email, from Jason Demers. Came through on October 6th. Dr. Jason Demers is an associate professor at the department of English at the University of Regina. He's also a board member with Lulu's Lodge. And I'd like to read his letter into the record because I think it speaks to some of the things that I've been talking about around Lulu's Lodge.

Dear Members of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly:

On October 10th the Legislative Assembly is being recalled to invoke the notwithstanding clause to push forward legislation regarding pronoun use in public schools. The clause is being invoked to override an injunction by Court of King's Bench Justice Michael Megaw that would allow the court to determine whether the policy violates children's rights to security and privacy. The injunction was granted because Justice Megaw was concerned that the policy could do irreparable harm if implemented.

In the current political climate, one worries that issues are

being used to sow ideological division, and that policy creation and debate hinge upon political strategy rather than due consideration and debate. As legislators, you wield a great deal of power and responsibility.

Academics benefit from the principle of academic freedom, but that freedom also comes with great responsibility. Academic opinion must be based in comprehensive reading of evidence-based research.

One hopes that as democratically elected officials, MLAs will be free to vote on the use of the notwithstanding clause after due consideration of testimony from people with expertise in family and human rights law, including the commissioner of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, the Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth, and from representatives from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

A study published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* in 2022 found that transgender youth are five times more likely to think about or attempt suicide than their peers. While we like to think of home as a safe place for children, this is a dangerous generalization for legislators to make.

I am on the board of directors for the John Howard Society of Saskatchewan. I have learned a great deal during my short time with the organization. John Howard Society of Saskatchewan operates a number of homes for at-risk youth in the province, including Lulu's Lodge in Regina. Lulu's Lodge provides a safe space for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth facing homelessness.

And I want to highlight this line here:

The main reason why queer youth face homelessness in the city is due to family rejection.

The main reason why queer youth face homelessness in the city is due to family rejection. The lodge is always close to capacity and sometimes has a wait-list.

Experts warn that the hastily drafted legislation will put youth in this province at risk of homelessness, self-harm, and suicide. With the safety and well-being of children held in the balance, this is a time for careful deliberation and non-partisan politics. I ask that you take your responsibility as legislators very seriously, lest irreparable harm be done to some of the most vulnerable youth in this province.

Sincerely yours,
Jason Demers

[19:30]

There's no indication, Mr. Speaker, that folks like those at the John Howard Society of Saskatchewan have been consulted in the creation of this bill. I mean they were here in the House because they weren't, and they're concerned about queer youth becoming homeless because of this bill. Let's push pause on this piece of legislation and consult with the folks who know what the repercussions of this legislation will be. You have the power

to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go back to my outcomes and indicators. We're getting to grade 5.

USC 5.1 [this is grade 5] Analyze personal eating practices. [Controversial, I think.]

(a) Investigate a variety of information about foods and beverages, e.g. printed resources, media, nutritionists, elders.

(b) Examine information and promotions created to influence eating practices.

I mean, it goes on. I won't read all of those.

USC 5.2 Understand the responsibilities associated with the physical, social, spiritual, and emotional changes of puberty.

Remember, this is grade 5 so these kids would be about 10, 11. Kids start going through puberty when they're about 10 — some of them start — 10 to 14. So they're learning about puberty right as they're starting to go through puberty. I think that's quite appropriate, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, you know, a girl with a uterus is going to start menstruating, and I don't think it's inappropriate that she learns about the menstruation cycle before she starts menstruating.

But I'll read some of those indicators here for understanding the responsibilities associated with the physical, social, spiritual, and emotional changes of puberty:

(a) Identify local, provincial, and national sources of information about puberty.

(b) Discuss criteria that could be used to decide if a source is reliable.

(c) Identify and use correct and respectful language and terminology in relation to sexual anatomy and gender identity as it relates to the changes of puberty.

(d) Determine that puberty is a natural process that occurs at different rates.

(e) Describe physical changes, both primary, e.g. reproductive organs and systems; and secondary, i.e. growth of body hair or changes in body shape that occur during puberty.

(f) Explain the process of menstruation and spermatogenesis. Spermatogenesis. [Sorry, Mr. Speaker.]

(g) Examine social, emotional, and spiritual changes that occur during puberty, e.g. sexual attractions; insecurities; moodiness; form your own ideas, morals and values; rely less on parents or caregivers for knowledge about life and about deep questions like who am I, why am I here, or what is the meaning of life.

(h) Examine strategies for managing the social, emotional,

physical, and spiritual changes associated with puberty, e.g. asking questions, engaging in physical activity, having sexual attraction to others.

(i) Describe personal responsibilities and determine the increasing importance of balanced health practices, e.g. bathing frequently [this is one that I would love my students to learn and take to heart — bathing frequently], using deodorant and other sanitary products; respect private space; keep personal matters appropriately private; respect differences associated with physical, spiritual, social, and emotional changes during puberty, e.g. body odour, menstruation, erections, emissions, peer pressure, social etiquette, insecurity, cultural roles and responsibilities.

(j) Discuss with a significant and trusted adult the expected changes, i.e. physical, social, spiritual, and emotional, and of responsibilities associated with puberty, e.g. rites of passage, special teachings about roles of women in some First Nations and Métis culture.

So that's grade 5 where you're learning a little bit about puberty.

USC 5.3 Analyze how infectious diseases, including HIV and hepatitis C, and non-infectious diseases change holistic well-being.

(a) Identify examples of local, provincial, and national health sources regarding illness and disease.

(b) Discuss criteria that can be used to identify if a health source is reliable.

Same as before. That was (a) and (b).

(c) Investigate various sources of information about illness and disease, including cancers, diabetes, depression, and heart disease.

(d) Distinguish between infectious and non-infectious, and illness and disease.

(e) Demonstrate an understanding of ways in which the body protects itself from illness, e.g. intact skin, understanding portals, openings such as eyes and mouth, and the immune system.

(f) Investigate and articulate how the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of self, family, and community is affected.

There's two more.

(g) Ask questions.

(h) Describe the challenges of illness.

USC 5.4 Analyze the connections between personal identity and personal well-being, and establish strategies to develop and support a positive self-image.

(a) Investigate knowledge and information about self-image.

(b) Discuss criteria that can be used to determine if a health source is reliable.

(c) Describe the qualities that are important in a person regardless of their gender, culture, appearance, sexual orientation, abilities, and/or language.

(d) Define stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination.

It goes on. There's more indicators about stereotyping and discrimination.

(i) Explore and describe what one can think, say, and do to develop a positive self-image.

USC 5.5 Analyze the impact of violence and the cycle of abuse on the holistic well-being of self, family, and community.

(a) Review qualities of healthy relationships.

That's a really important one, Mr. Speaker. And we spend a lot of time in my class talking about healthy relationships as being based on respect and honesty, reliability, trust, communication — really important things.

(b) Determine that abuse is used to gain or maintain power and control.

(c) Investigate the different types of abuse, e.g. physical, sexual, emotional, spiritual, mental, economic.

(d) Ask questions and seek answers for a deeper understanding. What do the experts believe about violence being inherited or learned? How is the cycle of abuse stopped? Why is abuse more common in some communities than in others? How are family/community norms about violence or abuse established and challenged?

(e) Recognize warning signals of unhealthy or abusive relationships — name calling, blaming, swearing, acting jealous/possessive, destroying possessions, lying, humiliating.

I mean it goes on, you know.

(f) Determine that a victim of abuse is never responsible or to be blamed for the violent and abusive behaviours of others.

I think that we live in a province with some of the highest rates of domestic violence. Here in health class, kids are learning about types of abuse and how to recognize abuse and how to be, you know, able to talk to someone about it and get out of that scenario, ask for help.

Again you'd think, based on what people talk about happening in the health curriculum in this province, that this would be wild stuff, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But healthy relationships . . . This is understanding your body as you change, going through puberty.

I got three more for grade 5:

Assess peer influence and demonstrate a readiness to prevent and/or avoid potential dangerous situations involving peer pressure, including lying, substance abuse, and bullying.

- (a) Discuss why peers pressure each other.
- (c) Examine the different levels of pressure: internal, indirect, direct.
- (d) Describe indicators of positive and negative peer pressure.
- (e) Discuss examples of positive/negative peer pressure influence on personal decision making.
- (f) Generate and practise possible strategies to avoid/reduce the risk of potentially dangerous/unhealthy/unsafe situations involving peer pressure, e.g . . .

We used to do this in my class, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where we'd run scenarios. You're with your friends and someone sees a used syringe on the ground. Someone says, we should pick it up. What do you do? And they'd actually run through that scenario so that if they get into that situation, they've rehearsed those lines.

Assess the importance of self-regulation and taking responsibility for one's actions.

Indicators:

- (a) Identify strategies for being calm and quiet/silent.

I feel like I don't have to go through all those.

DM 5.1 Analyze possible obstacles and envision solutions to address health challenges related to personal eating practices, changes of puberty, impact of illness, disease, identity and well-being, violence, peer pressure, and self-regulation.

Indicators:

- (a) Identify common barriers to adolescent well-being.
- (b) Determine health challenges and opportunities.

There's more. They're mostly all the same.

- (d) Recognize why health opportunities may not be embraced.

And last one for grade 5:

AP 5.1 Design and implement, with guidance, two five-day action plans that embrace healthy opportunities or address health challenges related to personal eating practices, changes of puberty, impact of illness/disease, identity and well-being, violence, peer pressure, and self-regulation.

That's grade 5.

All right. We're in grade 6 now. This is the curriculum that I

knew so well in grade 6 and 7:

USC 6.1 Analyze the factors that influence the development of personal standards and identity, and determine the impacts on healthy decision making, including cultural norms, societal norms, family values, peer pressures, mass media, traditional knowledge, white privilege, legacy of colonization, and heterosexual privilege.

Indicators:

- (a) Describe values one appreciates in self and in others and explain why.
- (b) Propose why people behave the way they do, e.g. personal beliefs, societal norms.
- (c) Identify sources of and evaluate information about personal beliefs and values.
- (d) Communicate an informed personal definition of personal standards, e.g. core personal values that are reflected in how you treat yourself, how you treat others, what and how you speak, your behaviours.
- (e) Uncover personal standards by exploring questions such as:

What are the standards that I expect myself to live by at all times?

What are the standards for dealing with challenges and problems?

What are the boundaries for the attitudes and actions that I will accept for myself, my peers, my families, and my community?

What standards are a part of my cultural heritage?

- (f) Consider how and why personal values may change, e.g. norms, trends, values, priorities, relationships, critical events.

- (g) Investigate, including through drama, dance, music, and/or visual art, the factors that have the most influence on personal standards.

I could go on on these, Mr. Speaker. They go all the way to:

- (n) Determine how decision making is influenced by personal standards.

[19:45]

An Hon. Member: — You're doing great job, Jared.

Mr. Clarke: — Thanks. No one's fallen asleep that I can see, so you're doing better than my former students . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . We're at the 6 now, Minister. We're making our way . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, that's good.

An Hon. Member: — Will there be a quiz on there?

Mr. Clarke: — The minister sounds like she wants me to hand over the quiz. She wants to do good.

USC 6.2 Appraise the importance of establishing/maintaining healthy relationships with people from diverse backgrounds who may or may not express differing values, beliefs, standards, and/or perspectives, i.e. people of various ages, cultures, socio-economic status, faiths, family structures, sexual orientation, and cognitive/physical abilities.

The indicators:

(a) Conclude the importance of respecting facts, evidence, and views of others when engaging in discussions.

Now I hope, I hope that the facts that we have been presenting to the government around the suicide rates of queer kids, around the homelessness rates of queer kids, I hope those facts are being heard.

(b) Ask compelling questions to initiate insight as to how people are the same, how people are different, and how individuals are unique.

(c) Shape new thoughts about oneself as an individual who has a unique heritage and particular influence on beliefs, standards, and perspectives.

(d) Identify sources of, and evaluate information about, diversity.

(e) Articulate a comprehensive understanding of prejudice, stereotype, and bias.

(f) Discuss and question stereotypes and biases that exist in the school and community.

(g) Explore stereotypes and beliefs — including but not limited to those related to age, culture, religion, family structure, and sexual orientation — both past and present, that might limit the number and kinds of healthy relationships.

It goes down to (k).

(i) Examine the characteristics of healthy relationships.

That's (j) . . .

(k) Explore and articulate an understanding of socio-economic class, gender, and culture as attributes of identity that are ascribed to groups of people and the ways that preconceptions about people based on these designations can be false, limiting, and harmful.

USC 6.3 Demonstrate an understanding of how non-curable and serious but treatable infections, including HIV and hepatitis C infections, are transmitted and how these infections influence the health and the identities of self, family, and community.

I don't think that one's controversial, I mean . . .

(b) Discuss the standard precautions and strategies to prevent the transmission of infectious diseases, e.g. handwashing, personal protective measures such as not sharing personal items, immunization, insect precautions, needle safety, avoiding others' bodily fluids, condoms, sexual abstinence.

I do think the condoms one is interesting, because as a teacher, being out on field trips in the community, you'd actually find used condoms on the ground with some regularity. And kids knowing not to touch that is something I think they should learn about. Where else are they going to learn that?

(e) Analyze how non-curable infections, including HIV, affect more people than they infect.

(f) Examine how thoughts and feelings about HIV infections might reinforce or challenge personal standards.

It goes down to (j).

USC 6.4 Assess and demonstrate strategies used to identify and make healthy situations in stressful situations . . . assess and demonstrate strategies used to identify and make healthy decisions in stressful situations.

(a) Identify sources of and evaluate information related to anxiety and stress.

(b) Inventory the kinds of situations that may create anxiety for grade 6 students, e.g. family breakup, moving, getting or unable to afford braces, glasses, public speaking, body image, academic pressure, foster care, death, economic status.

(d) Examine stressors for which one can plan, and over which one has control.

That was (d).

(f) Propose healthy — e.g. exercise, sleep, self-talk, deep breathing, communication — and unhealthy ways — e.g. substance abuse, aggression, withdrawal — of managing stress and compare related short-term and long-term consequences.

USC 6.5 Analyze the influences on perceptions and personal standards related to body image and the resulting impact on the identities and the well-being of self, family, and community.

(a) Identify sources of and evaluate information about influences of body type.

(b) Discuss stereotypes based on appearances, importance of not judging self nor others based on the appearance.

(c) Conclude that there is a wide and acceptable healthy range in body type.

It goes on to (l), Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I'll skip to the next page.

Again, I know this is tedious. But I think it's important for the conversation around what is actually happening in Saskatchewan schools, so that all of the members in this Assembly understand that there is nothing nefarious going on here.

USC 6.6 Develop and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and personal standards necessary for establishing and supporting safe practices and environments related to various activities.

(a) Examine safety risks for common, local adolescent activities.

(b) Reflect on and communicate personal and family attitudes toward safety.

It goes to (i). I'll skip ahead to USC 6.7:

Assess how healthy promotions and advertising influence personal standards and behaviours and determine how and why certain groups of consumers are targeted.

Seems pretty straightforward.

(b) Identify sources of and evaluate information related to the marketing and strategies used by a . . .

Are you taking that for your water? I thought you were getting ready for your . . . Thank you, my colleague.

DM 6.8 Assess the role of personal standards in decision making related to healthy relationships, non-curable infections, stress management, body image, safety, and health promotions.

(a) Distinguish similarities and differences in a variety of decision making models.

That one goes on to (f). I'm going to jump ahead:

DM 6.9 Examine health opportunities and challenges to establish personal goal statements related to healthy relationships, non-curable infections, stress management, body image, safety, and health promotions.

And lastly:

AP 6.10 Design and implement, with guidance, two six-day action plans that reflect affirmation of personal standards related to decision making, relationships, non-curable infections, stress management, body image, safety, and health promotion.

That one is pretty straightforward.

All right, the minister will be happy. We're moving on to the next grade. Seven, here we go:

USC 7.1 Establish and use strategies to commit to and act upon personal standards for various aspects of daily living over which an individual has control.

(a) Locate sources of and evaluate information — including

text, multimedia, web-based, human — according to specific criteria, about personal commitment.

(b) Investigate the concept of “resiliency” and determine its importance in personal commitment.

(c) Analyze when personal standards (see grade 6) [this is building on grade 6] may be reinforced or challenged.

(d) Examine factors (both positive and negative) that influence one's commitment to personal standards.

(e) Express insights into the connections between commitment to personal standards and healthy decision making.

They continue to (j). They are the same.

(h) Justify the kinds of supports needed to commit to personal standards.

USC 7.2 Examine critically, and use purposefully, blood-borne pathogen information/education, including HIV and hepatitis C, for the purpose of committing to behaviours that do not put one at risk of infection or co-infection.

(a) Locate sources and evaluate information, according to the specific criteria, about behaviours that do or do not put one at risk of HIV and/or hepatitis C infection.

(b) Distinguish between primary and secondary sources of HIV/AIDS information, and expert and non-expert sources.

(c) Examine the role of and determine the influence of technology, e.g. radio, print, television, internet, cell phones, personal listening devices, in gathering, processing, and using HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C information.

It continues on in the same manner to (i):

(g) Examine knowledge related to blood-borne infections, including HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C.

This one might be controversial, Mr. Speaker:

USC 7.3 Commit to personal safety practices while acquiring basic first aid knowledge and skills.

I'm being facetious, perhaps, that it's controversial.

(a) Locate sources and evaluate information, according to specific criteria, about safety practices and first aid skills.

It goes on to (i). I'm going to skip to:

USC 7.4 Demonstrate a personalized and coherent understanding of the importance of nurturing harmony in relationships and apply effective strategies to re-establish harmony when conflict arise.

(a) Express insight into what makes a relationship harmonious.

- (b) Locate sources and evaluate information, according to specific criteria, about relationships and conflict.
- (c) Create an informed personal definition of conflict.
- (d) Analyze potential sources of conflict.
- (e) Examine how disagreements are not the same as conflict.
- (f) Conclude that a certain degree of disagreement in relationship is normal.

It continues on to (p). Again I'll just reiterate that the indicators don't all need to be covered in a class. They are suggestions on how a teacher may teach the outcome. Otherwise I feel like the only thing a teacher would be teaching in their class is health, based on how much content there is to cover. It varies on the grades, but in this grade you'd only have health class twice a week for about 30 to 40 minutes each time.

USC 7.5 Evaluate personal food choices and needs by applying accurate and current nutritional knowledge.

- (a) Determine how and where to access healthy eating information.

I'm not going to read more of those indicators.

USC 7.6 Demonstrate interpersonal skills, including assertiveness skills, to effectively and skillfully manage peer pressure, e.g. alcohol and drugs, exclusionary behaviours, family expectations, academic pressures, rules and laws.

- (a) Locate sources and evaluate information according to specific criteria about interpersonal skills.
- (b) Analyze peer norms and trends and reflect on consequences of following and/or resisting them.
- (c) Compare the traits of a friend and those of a valued peer group member.
- (d) Examine how peer pressure may be positive or negative.
- (e) Examine similarities and differences in peer pressure faced by different genders, socio-economic backgrounds, family structures, sexual orientations, ages, and cultures.

So in that one . . . I mean, looking at the different lived realities of those different groups.

- (f) Express insight in response to the statement that resisting peer pressure takes personal commitment, skills, and practices.

[20:00]

How is it 8 o'clock already? I say, how is it 8 o'clock already?

USC 7.7 Investigate and express an understanding of possible discrepancies in morals that may determine and/or affect the commitment to the well-being of self, family,

community, and the environment.

- (c) Analyze how one's identity and moral code is created through contact with others who are the same and/or different.
- (d) Investigate possible relationships and/or tensions among values.
- (e) Appraise virtues as the quality of doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong.

Three more in grade 7.

DM 7.8 Examine and demonstrate personal commitment in making healthy decisions related to blood-borne infections, blood-borne pathogen information, safety practices, harmonious relationships, food choices, interpersonal skills, and morality.

DM 7.9 Examine health opportunities and challenges to establish personal commitment goal statements related to blood-borne pathogen information, safety practices, harmonious relationships, food choices, interpersonal skills, and morality.

I mean I think all the members who are listening are seeing the patterns of the outcomes. The last few outcomes look at like how does that all fit together? Thinking critically.

AP 7.10 Design, implement, and evaluate three six-day action plans that demonstrate personal commitment to responsible health action related to blood-borne pathogen information, safety practices, harmonious relationships, food choices, interpersonal skills, and morality.

All right, that's grade 7. We're just ripping through these. Oh, no. Oh, I can't say anything about that.

USC 8.1 Analyze and establish effective strategies of support for purposes of helping others increase health-enhancing behaviours.

Indicators:

- (a) Locate and evaluate, according to student-generated criteria, both sources of information and about support strategies.
- (b) Describe the benefits one receives from helping others.
- (c) Examine the functions of support persons and networks.
- (d) Compare informal and formal community supports and how to access them.

I mean all of those, they go down to (k). They're the same.

USC 8.2 Analyze how personal prejudices, biases, and habits of mind shape assumptions about family identities, structures, roles, and responsibilities.

Again here we're describing:

- (a) Describe a variety of family structures, e.g. nuclear, mixed, childless families, foster families, same-sex families, single-parent, extended families.
- (b) Examine family member roles and how they are established.
- (c) Analyze gender roles that exist in families.
- (d) Examine the family responsibilities associated with family roles.
- (e) Explore the expectations that parent/caregivers and child/youth have of one another.

It goes down to (m). I mean, you get the gist of what we're doing here.

- (j) Recognize, name, and challenge instances of inequity, bias, intolerance, and discrimination related to family identities, structures, roles, and responsibilities.

USC 8.3. Investigate and analyze the impact of informal and formal supports and services, including testing/diagnostic services, available to individuals, families, and communities infected with non-curable and serious but treatable infectious diseases.

- (a) Locate and evaluate, according to student-generated criteria, by source of and information about the supports needed/wanted by individuals, families, and communities infected by non-curable or affected by non-curable and serious but treatable infectious diseases, including HIV and hepatitis C.
- (b) Describe the effects of non-curable and serious but treatable infections/diseases, including HIV and hepatitis, on families and communities.
- (c) Explore the consequences of having or not having access to treatment options, e.g. the cost of medication and supports, both formal and informal, for self, family, communities.
- (d) Recognize the recommended follow-up procedures and supports for those who support positive . . . [Sorry.]
- (e) Explore the recommended follow-up procedures and supports for those who test positive for the HIV virus, or HI virus.
- (f) Describe how misinformation or a lack of understanding may influence the kinds of support available to people infected with or affected by non-curable infections.

It goes down to (j) . . . or to (l), sorry.

USC 8.4 Demonstrate an understanding of the impact of violence, including but not limited to emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, spiritual abuse, and neglect, on the well-being of and the supports needed for self, family, and community.

- (a) Locate and evaluate according to student-generated criteria both sources of information about violence and abuse in families and communities.
- (b) Discuss common definitions of abuse and violence and develop informed personal definitions of both.
- (f) Discuss the cycle of abuse.

USC 8.5

I'm almost done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with this.

8.5 Assess how body image satisfaction or dissatisfaction and over-reliance on appearance as a source of identity and self-esteem affects the quality of life of self and family.

I mean, I think that one's fairly straightforward.

USC 8.6 Examine and assess the concept of sustainability from perspectives and develop an understanding of implications for the well-being of others, self, and the environment.

- (c) Examine and appreciate the ways natural environments meet physical, aesthetic, and spiritual needs.
- (d) Examine practices and activities that pose a threat to the environment and to the health of people.
- (e) Question family and community norms and expectations regarding caring for the environment.
- (f) Analyze rules, regulations, and laws related to the environment, environmental health, and the health of individuals.
- (l) Discuss contributions of traditional First Nations and Métis people to environmental health.

USC 8.7 Assess the social, cultural, and environmental influences on and supports for sexual health knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and decisions.

- (a) Compare the perceived and actual sexual attitudes or norms in the community.
- (b) Locate and evaluate, according to student-generated criteria, both sources of and information about sexual health.
- (c) Examine influences that shape community norms about sexual health.
- (d) Compare sexual attitudes and norms of adults to those of youth in the community.
- (e) Determine the possible consequences of not knowing and questioning community attitudes or norms.
- (f) Examine how the cultural, social, and environmental influences may determine people's knowledge and access to sexual health information.

(g) Examine and develop an understanding of influences on responsible sexual health decisions, e.g. family, culture, social, religion.

I mean, I think “(g) Examine and develop an understanding of influences on responsible sexual health decisions” is what we want to see happen “e.g. family, culture, social, religion.”

So taking all of those pieces, and how does that impact your sexual health decisions? And families should be a part of that conversation. Again, in my classroom, I asked . . . Whoops, sorry. I asked parents to have these conversations with their kids while we were talking about sexual health in class. Ask them what you were learning in my class. Have a conversation about your family values. That’s what was happening in my classroom and, I know, classrooms across this province.

It goes on to:

(k) Determine how access to sexual health supports and services influence personal and community sexual health.

Three more here. They’re the DMs:

8.8 Appraise the role of support in making healthy decisions related to family roles and responsibilities, non-curable infections/diseases, violence and abuse, body image, sustainability, and sexual health.

DM 8.9 Analyze the health opportunities and challenges and establish support others personal goal statements related to family roles and responsibilities, non-curable infections/diseases, violence and abuse, body image, sustainability, and sexual health.

AP 8.10 Design, implement, and evaluate three seven-day action plans . . . [Every year, just more, longer action plans to support.] . . . for responsible health actions related to family roles, responsibilities, non-curable infections/diseases, violence and abuse, body image, sustainability, and sexual health.

We’re talking grade 8 here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And again I’ll reiterate that I’m going through all of these because I think it’s important for everyone to understand what’s actually being taught in Saskatchewan schools around the health curriculum and that it’s not some crazy, wild thing that is often being portrayed.

And I will reiterate, you know, we’re talking in grade 8 about examining, you know, how you’re making sexual health decisions as a grade 8. And I think it’s a fair statement to say oh, yeah: “Assess the social, cultural, and environmental influences on and supports for sexual health knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and decisions.” I think it’s safe to say that a small number or more of grade 8s are engaging in sexual activity, so they should probably know about these things before they do that and the risks associated with that.

All right. My last one, grade 9. I’m going to do these quickly:

USC 9.1 Develop informed conclusions about the importance of leadership skills and health promotion and healthy decision making.

USC 9.2 Analyze how the well-being of self, family, community, and the environment is enhanced by a comprehensive community approach to safety.

USC 9.3 Interpret, critique, and question the stigma associated with individuals, families, and communities living with and affected by non-curable infections/diseases including HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C and for those who advocate for them.

USC 9.4 Analyze the norms and expectations associated with romantic relations as a means to effectively plan for related health problems.

So these are sexually transmitted infections.

(b) Compare why and how people become involved in romantic relationships in the past and become involved in the present.

(c) Categorize similarities and differences that exist among cultural norms and expectations regarding romantic relationships.

(d) Interpret how community and cultural norms might influence the personal standards which were introduced back in grade 6 and the limits one sets for dating relationships.

(g) Assess why some young people choose not to become involved in romantic relationships.

Abstinence, right.

(i) Analyze relationship violence in the context of family and cultural norms.

USC 9.5 Evaluate a variety of healthy food policies and plan to participate in the development, revision, and/or implementation of healthy food policy.

USC 9.6 Analyze the health, economic, and social supports and challenges of addictions on self, family, community, and the environment.

USC 9.7 Analyze tragic death and suicide as distressing community issues and appraise what supports and health promotions exist in the community to address these issues.

USC 9.8 Assess the ways self, family, and community facilitate healthy living for people with chronic illness.

USC 9.9 Develop and demonstrate the personal insight, motivation, and skills necessary to enhance and promote sexual health and avoid health-compromising sexual attitudes and behaviours.

So I’ll touch on these ones:

(a) Examine personal attitudes about sexual health.

So how do you feel as an individual about your sexual health?

[20:15]

(b) Acquire knowledge that is appropriate for students' levels of development . . .

Okay, I want to reiterate that one, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(b) Acquire knowledge that is appropriate for students' level of development, and directly relevant to their own sexual health needs, including:

an informed understanding of sexuality;

prevention of sexual health problems, including pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, STIs; and the

enhancement of sexual health.

(c) Analyze abstinence as the healthiest and safest sexual choice for young people.

Is that a controversial one? "Analyze abstinence as the healthiest and safest sexual choice for young people."

(d) Discuss sexual health choices that reduce the risk of health-compromising consequences.

(e) Assess how to raise, discuss, and negotiate sexual health issues with partners.

(f) Evaluate the potential outcomes of sexual health attitudes and behaviours.

(g) Determine how attitudes and behaviours may interfere or enhance sexual health.

(h) Clarify personal standards that influence sexual health decisions.

(i) Examine the strategies of personal commitment — see grade 7 — that are required to commit to one's standards/decisions related to sexual health.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my class these were conversations, that I asked parents and emailed parents, and said, hey, you should have these conversations with your kids. Talk to them about sexual health and what your family values are. It's happening.

Goes on to (n) for this outcome. I'll jump ahead to:

DM 9.10 Assess the role of health promotion in making healthy decisions related to comprehensive approaches to safety, non-curable infections, disease, romantic relationships, healthy food policies, addictions, tragic death and suicide, chronic illness, and sexual health.

Last two, here:

DM 9.11 Analyze the health opportunities and challenges and establish personal health promotion goal statements related to the comprehensive approaches to safety,

non-curable infection, disease, romantic relationships, addictions, tragic death, suicide, chronic illness, and sexual health.

And the last one:

AP 9.12 Design, implement, and evaluate three eight-day action plans that demonstrate responsible health promotion related to comprehensive approaches to safety, non-curable infection, diseases, romantic relationships, healthy food policies, addictions, tragic death, suicide, chronic illness, and sexual health.

There we go, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We made it through the entire health curriculum in Saskatchewan, and I would argue that none of these are inappropriate and scary.

I don't know. That's all I got. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm getting close to the end of my remarks here. I'm not going to do what my colleague from Saskatoon Meewasin did and say he was done and then continue to go for another hour or two, but I have two more documents that I want to kind of touch on.

And that of course, you know, is the Saskatchewan advocate for child and youth and the *Review of the Ministry of Education Policy: Use of Preferred First Name and Pronouns for Students*. And I know that my colleagues have touched on this. My colleague from Saskatoon Eastview went into great depth on this. But I think I just want to make a few points with this.

I've talked about gender identity already. I've tried to explain it as per the document that the Government of Saskatchewan gives to educators to deepen the discussion around gender identity and sexual orientation, which are a key part of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and a key part to *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*.

But I want to note here on page 9 in the advocate's report that says:

The Canadian Paediatric Society states that children come to understand societal expectations of gender at a young age. They continue to develop their understanding of their own gender identity as they grow older through personal reflection and with input from their social environment, like peers, family, and friends. As puberty begins, some youth may realize that their experienced gender is different from their assigned sex at birth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is coming from the Canadian Paediatric Society. Now before I became a teacher, I was a biologist. I went to the U of R and completed a degree, an undergraduate in science, specifically around biology. I've continued to be active around research and science. And so when I have, you know, the Canadian Paediatric Society . . . These are professionals who have gone to school for a very, very long time, and they've studied this and they know this. For them to say . . . You know, this is the information that these people have used a scientific method to determine. I think we need to take note of that.

And I think the thing about gender is if, as a parent, if your child is cisgender — which I talked about already, meaning that your biological sex matches with your gender identity and your gender

expression — if that child is cisgender, you don't even notice when they start to take up and act out gender norms in our society. But when they don't, when their biological sex doesn't match with their gender expression, you know, then it becomes . . . people notice those things, right?

If I took a cisgender four-year-old to Toys“R”Us, I took my nephew. And I take him to Toys“R”Us, at four years old, he's going to know which aisle he should walk down — the boys' toy aisle or the girls' toy aisle. Because kids at that age, as the Canadian Paediatric Society states, have already started to internalize the gender norms of our society. The advocate goes on to say: “gender diversity is a part of the human condition and people have challenged the binary understanding of gender throughout history.”

I think of the First Nations communities that were here before colonization, and the celebration of people who were two-spirited, right. That was demonized through colonization. But a different gender system existed here on this land for millennia, and it wasn't just male-female.

The advocate goes on to say:

Transgender and gender-diverse people continue to face stigmatization, prejudice, and fear. Transgender people challenge our very Western understanding of the world, and we make them pay the cost of our confusion by their suffering.

This paragraph stands out to me as something that's really important to this conversation: “In general, suicide is the leading cause of death among young people aged 15 to 24.” I want that to sink in. Suicide is the number one cause of death amongst young people aged 15 to 24, and in Saskatchewan we often find ourselves at the top of the list in this regard.

You know, if I was sitting in government and I read that, I feel like maybe that one would garner an emergency sitting. Instead we find ourselves here in this Assembly talking about pronouns and outing trans kids. It's almost like the opposite because we know when trans kids aren't supported, their risk of suicide and self-harm is so much greater.

When they don't have support at home, if they're homeless because they've been rejected, like I talked about with Lulu's Lodge where they said very plainly that the . . . I'll go back to the quote. Where did it go? “The reason why LGBTQS youth face homelessness in Regina is usually because they are rejected by their own families.”

That's the issue with this bill. Outing trans kids to non-supportive families will result in more homelessness, will lead to more suicide. We can engage parents in meaningful ways to increase educational outcomes for students across the province, but this is not it.

Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to wrap up here. I want to touch on a few things before I cede the floor, and I hope the members opposite will hear me for these last few minutes.

I've said it many times today that I was a grade 6/7 teacher for the last eight years. And my students were aged 11, 12, 13. And

over those eight years I've taught hundreds of kids. And one thing that I learned during those eight years is that those kids are smart, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They are smarter than most people give them credit for.

They're not perfect. They make mistakes. But they know who they are. They know who they are in here. Maybe they don't have the words to describe it, but they know. They know that they might be different from their peers. They know.

These kids know who might be safe to tell that they feel different, that they might be transgender, nonbinary, gender-nonconforming, based on what the people around them say or do, day to day. They know who's safe. They know who they are. They know who's safe.

And they know, Mr. Speaker, who might not be safe or who they're not ready to tell yet. And just because they're not ready to tell a parent right in this moment doesn't mean that they don't trust them. It doesn't mean that that relationship is bad. It just means that they're not ready yet. But they know.

When I posted about this on social media a while ago, a retired teacher friend commented on my post. And I want to share what he said. He wrote, and I quote:

I had a friend when I was young who was gay. He committed suicide because he couldn't deal with coming out and the associated pressures. Although he was accepted by friends, he couldn't deal with the family members.

Suicide rates are the leading cause of death amongst young people 15 to 24. Transgender and gender-diverse youth are over seven times more likely to attempt suicide.

[20:30]

This is the problem, Mr. Speaker. Still today there are youth out there who think because of all of this that the government has unleashed — although there was a sentiment before — there are youth out there who think it's easier to be dead than come out. And that's a problem.

I mean, I want to be optimistic that the government is working for the best interest of young people and for families in this province. But when you put a clause in the bill that says you can't be sued if anyone is harmed by this bill, I have a hard time believing that this is in the best interest of kids.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues have been reading letters that hundreds of people, concerned people from Saskatchewan, have written. Real stories of concerns from teachers, from parents, from experts, and most importantly, Mr. Speaker, stories from the 2SLGBTQ+ community. My colleague from Saskatoon Meewasin did an amazing job of bringing those voices to this Assembly.

Those kids in the gallery yesterday came here to protest this bill. They know if their friends can be out at home; they know if they can't be out at home. Last week we had a parent in the gallery who lost their nonbinary 14-year-old to suicide. This child had a supportive family, but they struggled to get the mental health support that Bee needed.

I've got my own two kids who are 11. I talked about them in the beginning of my speech here today. I can't imagine, I cannot imagine what it would be like to lose a child. And I know members on the other side of this House have kids and grandkids too. What if this was one of your children who couldn't get access to the supports they needed?

I talked about Lulu's Lodge, where homeless queer kids go if families reject them because of their gender expression or sexual orientation. At a presentation, a professional development presentation when I sat on the SCC [school community council] at my kids' school, I heard a story about a Saskatchewan student who had 15 minutes to get out of their house once they were outed — 15 minutes to gather their stuff and go. And they never went back.

The point here is that the government does not seem willing to acknowledge this. What if a parent or parents are not supportive of the child's choice to go by a different name or pronoun? If the result of telling a parent means that the child is rejected from their home, what has been gained?

Mr. Speaker, I wish somehow I could implore the members on the other side of the House to see how this bill could so negatively, so negatively impact a small number of vulnerable kids in our schools and in this province. I would implore them to rethink this because kids might die because of this bill. This is not hyperbole. This is the real life for those kids who are here, who will be directly affected by this bill.

Will this be the Premier's legacy — to stand on the wrong side of history? In a decade, will those members be proud of the harm that this bill caused? There is time to amend the bill. There is time to stop this.

I'll leave the Assembly with a line that I think is important. Be careful who you hate, because it could be someone you love. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — I ask the Assembly leave to make introductions, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — Will the Assembly give leave to make an introduction?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Assembly is agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've had a number of guests join us this week during our extended hours of debate, Mr. Speaker. And I have to give all guests credit for doing that. I know those benches are not the most comfortable seats in the House, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, with us tonight, joining us is Jaimie Smith-Windsor. Jaimie serves as the president of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. In my brief time as minister, I've had a number of opportunities to meet with the SSBA [Saskatchewan

Schools Boards Association] already, both the executive as well as the board Chairs, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to welcome Jaimie to her Assembly. School boards play an important role in our education system here in the province. Locally elected, they make important decisions on behalf of their communities and their families. So I just ask all members to join me in welcoming Jaimie to her legislature.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I request leave for an introduction.

The Deputy Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'll join with the minister to welcome Jaimie Smith-Windsor to her Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and to thank her for her leadership in this province now and always in this very important sector, that being education.

Jaimie's a remarkable leader for Sask Rivers, the school division that she serves as a member for. She's an incredible leader for the 27 school divisions as the president of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. You know, she has a wonderful family as well. She operates a business. She's a wonderful advocate for those that are disabled, Mr. Speaker. We have in this Assembly here an incredible leader.

And it's pertinent, Mr. Speaker, and important as well to identify that she's been a strong voice to say that this bill is the wrong direction, that this needs to be paused, this needs to be scrapped, Mr. Speaker, and that this isn't the way forward.

But to Jaimie Smith-Windsor on this issue and so many more, and standing up for the best interests of students and the future of Saskatchewan, to her I say thank you.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 137 — *The Education (Parents' Bill of Rights) Amendment Act, 2023/Loi modificative de 2023 sur l'éducation (Déclaration des droits des parents)*
(continued)

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to be up on my feet and enter into debate on this bill. It is my intention to read into the record this evening letters that have been submitted to me by my constituents in Saskatoon Nutana.

I want to thank them from the outset here for the thoughtful words that they have put down on paper; for the time; for the consideration, serious consideration, and thought on this weighty matter. And by reading their remarks and letters into the record, it allows for their voices to be heard here in their legislature.

Maybe before I do that, I also want to acknowledge my colleague, the member for Regina Walsh Acres, for very moving remarks that he's just made. And you know, I enter into this debate in a very solemn manner. I think that the many points that he's just made illustrate the gravity of the situation and the harms that it may and will create. And I want to thank him for his courage and thoughtfulness in the words that he just shared with us here this evening. And so I will begin.

This first letter comes anonymously and should not be unfamiliar to the members across. It is directed to:

Premier Scott Moe and the Sask Party caucus:

You claim to want to have a trust and bond with parents and children, but you are going to tear families and friends apart. I'm a 13-year-old nonbinary kid, and I've had slurs, swears, and insults thrown at me. So many others like me who have it the same are just going to have it worse now. Things like death threats, being jumped, being beaten up, and so much more are going to happen to kids like me.

Are you aware that the Trevor Project, the 2022 national survey on LGBTQ youth mental health, found that 45 per cent of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, including more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth? You are going to raise those rates significantly. Do you really want to have that on your conscience? "LGBTQ youth are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers."

That is a resource referenced, Johns et al., 2019, and Johns et al., 2020.

All I want is for you to treat my community like humans and give us decent human rights. Thank you.

That first letter submitted anonymously by a 13-year-old constituent.

This one comes from Joe Rubin:

Premier Moe:

I'm writing to express my deep concern about the direction of your government with respect to the school pronoun policy. I've heard you say that you haven't heard much opposition to this policy, and so I wanted to get in touch to add my name to the "against" column.

I had the opportunity to meet you in early March of this year in Chandigarh at the residence of the consul general and again at the hotel for a round-table discussion, and I hope that putting a face to my concerns will help to humanize them.

This is a nuanced issue, which I think requires a more holistic conversation. I find it disingenuous to say that schools are trying to exclude parents from their children's lives in education. I think all educators would 100 per cent agree that a child is better off with the support and involvement of their parents. However there are instances where parents are not supportive and may be very hostile

towards a child's gender identity, and outing that child could be extremely damaging. LGBT and particularly T youth are vulnerable and at a greater risk of self-harming, including suicide.

I believe there is a fundamental misunderstanding on the part of the government about what gender identity is. This is not a choice or preference. A person's gender, whether or not it matches their biological sex, is intrinsic to that individual. The choice is whether the person will live openly and express their true self or stay in the closet.

As a gay man, I remember what it was like to live in an inhospitable environment in Saskatoon in the '90s, where it was very clear to me that coming out was dangerous. I am deeply worried for youth who may be pushed back into that closet, a very dark place, which I can tell you from personal experience is not a place conducive to positive mental health. Coming out is the most difficult thing a young person faces, and it is something that can only safely be done when that person is ready. Forced outing is dangerous and, frankly, cruel.

From the discussion I have seen on the part of the government, it is clear that there has not been consultation with transgender Saskatchewanians, who would be able to explain the impacts of this policy change on their safety and mental health. Your government has not demonstrated that it understands the impacts of such a policy on the small proportion of the population of children which it will affect.

We have heard from the Children's Advocate that the proposed policy has the potential to do harm, and the injunction imposed by the court also demonstrates that there is at least cause for pause and sober second thought.

[20:45]

I am deeply alarmed that you are pursuing the use of the notwithstanding clause to push this policy through. The use of this incredibly heavy instrument without allowing the courts to have the opportunity to consider the impacts of this policy on the Charter rights of vulnerable children is a mistake, and I urge you not to move forward with this.

Sincerely,
Joe Rubin

I want to thank Joe Rubin for entering his comments to me and the opportunity to share them here this evening. These next set of comments also come from a concerned citizen and teacher:

I am writing this letter to you today as a very concerned citizen of Saskatchewan and a very concerned teacher. The policy that is being introduced by Scott Moe and his government is dangerous and discriminatory. This policy will create scenarios where I, as a teacher, will be legally obligated to out my students to their parents. If parents are transphobic or not accepting of LGBTQ2S+ identities, I will have no choice but to put a student in danger of emotional, verbal, or physical abuse or even the possibility of being kicked out of their home. Nobody has the right to out a queer person, period. Children have rights and parental rights

should not override them.

I am a queer teacher and an advocate for queer students. This does not mean that I am pushing an agenda on my classroom. I am not talking about queer people and issues every day in my classroom. It's a topic that doesn't come up that often. I am not forcing different pronouns on my students or advertising the LGBTQ2S+ lifestyle. However my classroom is a safe space for queer students and I am a safe person to talk to. If a student chooses to confide in me, I will not judge them, question them, or berate them. I will support them, accept them, and love them.

Trans youth are five times more likely than their peers to attempt suicide in Canada. According to a 2019 Canadian health survey, the same survey, more than half of all transgender youth reported that they seriously considered suicide in the previous 12 months before the survey. These are scary statistics for an already marginalized group of children. And Scott Moe would like to further marginalize trans kids by ignoring their Charter rights and freedom.

Furthermore, regarding the new policy that is hastily put together without consultation with school boards, teachers, or experts, sex education is now at risk in our classrooms. According to the new policy, as a teacher I am forbidden to bring in an outside organization like OutSaskatoon or Saskatoon Sexual Health centre to provide inclusive, comprehensive education regarding sexual health. Not allowing these organizations that are experts on the subject come in and share knowledge with students is a huge disservice to them and to teachers.

According to the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute's website, Saskatchewan youth have high rates of sexually transmitted infections, or STIs, and unintended pregnancies. And provincial rates of sexualized violence are among the highest in the country. These rates indicate that youth are participating in unsafe sexual behaviours.

Effective sexual health education is an important tool to address potential gaps in knowledge and to help ensure that youth have the information and skills they need to make informed decisions about their sexual health.

Some teachers may not feel equipped or prepared to deliver comprehensive sexual education in their classrooms. I welcomed both Saskatoon Sexual Health and OutSaskatoon into my classroom last year because of the incredible programs they offer to better educate Saskatchewan youths. They provided professional, age-appropriate, and inclusive presentations about important issues that are relevant to many school-aged children, like consent, puberty, gender identity, and healthy relationships.

Moreover according to the policy parents are now allowed to opt out of all or part of sexual health education in classrooms. This part of the policy really shows how the government did not consult anyone who actually works in these systems, like teachers, principals, or school board officials, because this is already common practice in our school system.

I have had parents request that their children be excused from sexual health lessons, and as a teacher I have no problem accommodating parents' and students' needs. This is further proof that the policy is to pander to Sask Party voters without any real consideration of how these new rules will affect schools, classrooms, teachers, and students.

If this new policy was really about improving the lives of Saskatchewan students and parents, Scott Moe and his party would be taking a good hard look at the current state of education in this province. As student enrolment grows and the needs of students become more complex, teachers, administrators, and support staff are attempting to operate with an increasingly tight budget.

Since I've become a teacher, I have witnessed the countless cuts that school boards are forced to make because of the chronic underfunding to our education system. While Scott Moe, his government, and a small group of extremists believe that the biggest problem children are facing in schools today has to do with pronouns, I can tell you, from a teacher who works with students every day, the problems in our school have nothing to do with gender identity and sex education.

I have students in my middle-years classroom who cannot read or write because they haven't been in school for years because of the pandemic. I have over 15 students in my classroom who are recent immigrants or refugees who are learning English as an additional language. I have children in my classroom with autism, intellectual disorders, ADHD, physical health concerns, financial securities, and more.

This is my daily reality as I struggle to reach every child and help them succeed with minimal support and services. This is the reality of every teacher in Saskatchewan these days because class sizes are getting bigger and the needs of students are growing in complexity. All of this, and the government's per-student funding is the second lowest in the country. The Sask Party have created all of these problems because they simply do not value education or children in this province. Instead of focusing on the real issues in education, Scott Moe has strategically deployed this tactic to distract voters from the countless issues in Saskatchewan and his government.

Invoking the notwithstanding clause and claiming Justice Megaw's ruling is judicial overreach is a dangerous, slippery slope. And yet we live in a democratic society, and we are protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This political move is starting to resemble a dictatorship as Scott Moe ignores the countless protests, letters, emails, and phone calls from concerned citizens who believe what the Sask Party is doing is wrong. What is stopping this government from invoking the notwithstanding clause in the future? And whose rights will the Sask Party want to trample on next?

Saskatchewan has become a national embarrassment. Trans kids have rights. They must be protected. Shame on Scott Moe.

Sincerely,
A concerned citizen and teacher

Well I really want to thank this concerned citizen and teacher for taking the time to write this letter and point out the issues, the challenges that she faces in the classroom, and her concerns with this very damaging bill.

I'll move on. Next set of letters I'm going to read come from parents. This first one is from Gabriela Fuentealba. And I apologize Gabriela, or Gabriela, if I've pronounced your name wrong.

Dear Erika Ritchie:

I am writing as one of your constituents to express my concern regarding the government's intention to invoke the notwithstanding clause to legislate their pronoun policy, which is currently under constitutional challenge at the Saskatchewan King's Bench court.

I am a parent and also a lawyer, so I am horrified by all of this on two levels. First, I am horrified that our government, Scott Moe and his party, are pandering to a bigoted subset of their political base to curry favour by trampling on the rights of children. Second, I am horrified that our government is behaving like a despotic autocracy or dictatorship by spreading misinformation and lies, making incorrect and bald assertions about our judicial system, and using undemocratic action to try and force legislation.

It makes me wonder what kind of money is on the line for Scott Moe and his party, because I can't imagine he would work so hard to legislate this policy from a purported principled basis. I truly believe something is beneath the surface. Perhaps supporters of the party with lots of pooled resources and money are pushing this along.

Scott Moe keeps talking about parental rights when this is something that doesn't even really exist. It's language that is meant to instill fear in people unnecessarily. Of course parents don't want to feel left out of what happens at their children's schools, but they already get information from parent-teacher meetings, emails, and access to speak directly to teachers and school supervisors should they have concerns.

The amount of misinformation Scott Moe has spewed about these issues is truly astonishing. It would be expected in an undemocratic state or dictatorship but should not be the norm here. Children are people with inherent rights. Scott Moe has not once publicly acknowledged that this is true. It's not convenient for his narrative. This is fact and not opinion, and yet he chooses to completely ignore this reality and operate in an alternate reality.

Parents have duties and responsibilities. Of course parents are people too, and all people have rights under the Charter, but the way Scott Moe is framing this is conceptually incorrect and meant to mislead.

Further, no one is advocating keeping parents in the dark about their children at school. Bennett Jensen, co-counsel for UR Pride and director of legal at Egale Canada, stated to media that "together we can ensure parents' roles are fully

respected without putting the most vulnerable young people in harm's way."

Despite this Scott Moe has made statements to the media that parents should not be left in the dark after Justice Megaw's decision to grant an injunction pending the substantive hearing of the constitutional challenge. If Scott Moe paid any attention to the submissions of counsel challenging the policy, he would have realized how incorrect he is. But again it wouldn't align with his alternate reality.

The only time keeping information from parents would be appropriate is in instances where there is serious suspected or confirmed abuse in the home.

[21:00]

And no one can disagree with keeping information away from an abusive parent. Indeed this is already done in our child and family services system within the Ministry of Social Services.

Scott Moe also said to the media following the injunction that there is strong support for his policy by a majority of people in Saskatchewan. The only evidence tendered at the injunction hearing was that the government received 18 letters in support of such a policy prior to it being implemented. These were submitted between June and August 2023, citing favour towards the similar policy in New Brunswick. According to the affidavit of the Saskatchewan Minister of Education, as reported by the CBC and others, it only took nine days to create the government's naming and pronoun policy.

I know for a fact that over 100 people in my circle of friends and acquaintances sent letters to the government following implementation of this policy, stating they were against it. Did the government tender this evidence at the injunction hearing? Because this information was absolutely in the hands of the government at the date of the injunction hearing. I personally received confirmation that my letter was received on August 30th, 2023, from Holly Buzila, administrative assistant to the Honourable Jeremy Cockrill.

The hearing of the injunction took place on September 19th, 2023. The filing deadline for the parties to tender their affidavit evidence was only a few days before that. Since these letters were already in the hands of the government, it would have been very easy to include these letters against their policy.

I have not personally read the affidavits tendered by the government in the injunction hearing, but if it comes to pass that the government withheld relevant documents such as my letter, the entire legitimacy of this government should be called into question. If for some bureaucratic reason the letters against the policy did not get to the correct person drafting the affidavit for the government at the injunction stage, then they would be available to be submitted by the government at the substantive hearing in November.

But wait. Scott Moe has decided to pre-empt this by invoking the notwithstanding clause to likely avoid this inconvenient reality. He is not cunning or wise because invoking the clause will not bury the evidence that exists against this policy. People will write more letters, and I'm sure counsel that has brought the constitutional challenge already made an access to information request to get this information from the government if they are unwilling to share it themselves.

Scott Moe told reporters that the injunction was judicial overreach. This man knows nothing about the law. The judge followed the law and applied it according to the evidence in front of him. Scott Moe can disagree with the outcome, but this is not judicial overreach. Scott Moe is a dangerous person by making such statements, because it undermines the legitimacy of our judicial system and creates unnecessary fear in people.

Scott Moe told reporters that criticism by the Children's Advocate, a lawsuit, and evidence of a lack of expert consultation or school division consultation would not affect the policy. That's just insane. There is no other word for such a position. Consulting such experts is precisely what you should do in implementing any policy.

And again Scott Moe saying parents are the experts of their own children in response to questions about why he did not consult any experts on this policy is again misleading and actually condescending. Of course, I as a parent know my child best. However, I am not an expert in child psychology or an education expert. This is about those children that are most vulnerable — trans children — and how best to protect children's rights.

Now Scott Moe is behaving like a toddler, stomping his feet and invoking the notwithstanding clause. This is a rarely invoked clause for good reason. Our province is a national embarrassment at this point. This clause is rarely invoked because it expressly overrides Charter rights. Our federal government has never even invoked such a clause. And the instances that provinces have invoked it before are very different from the current circumstances.

Scott Moe won't even allow the court case to be heard in November and see what the court says about the constitutionality of his policy. He will reconvene the legislature early to render the court case moot. That is absolutely disgusting and disgraceful.

Even if there are people that agree with Scott Moe's policy, then the dismantling of our democratic system and descent into fascism in this province should be a concern to all. The proper recourse to a decision the government doesn't like in court is to appeal. He could appeal all the way to the Supreme Court if he wants to. But no, he's behaving like a despot. So I cannot overstate how concerned I am about all of this.

For my trans community members, I am scared for you because our government is creating an environment for hateful people to behave with impunity. For my entire Saskatchewan community, including the bigots, I am

concerned for all of us by the way our government is showing its colours. It's clear the way he has behaved in the last couple of weeks. Scott Moe doesn't even care about the bigoted people that he think they are protected by him. So please read out my letter at the legislature. I want Scott Moe to hear my words. Shame on him. Shame on his government.

Sincerely,
Gabriela Fuentealba

There's some pretty damning words written by one of my constituents, a parent and a lawyer. And I thank her for taking the time to share her views with me so that I could read them into the record here this evening, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, I'm still going. I was just saying that he's thanking Gabriela for her letter.

I'm going to move on to the next one. This one is also from a parent lawyer, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's another long one. I'm not sure if I can . . . oh, okay. This is from Chad Eggerman, re use of notwithstanding clause:

Dear Government of Saskatchewan:

I grew up on a family farm in east central Saskatchewan, a few kilometres from June Draude, and attended school in Watson. My mother, father, brother, and sister-in-law have been expanding and operating the family farm founded by my grandfather throughout my lifetime. My grandparents on both my father's and mother's side were farmers, as were their parents before them. My son is an active farmer. If you chase the Eggerman name back a few hundred years in High German, it means "tiller of the land."

Given my background, I have an understanding of constituents in rural Saskatchewan, and having worked and lived as a lawyer in Saskatoon the past 15 years, I also have an appreciation for urban issues. I believe that both rural and urban people in Saskatchewan need to find common ground on this government's proposed use of the notwithstanding clause.

Although I am a lawyer, qualified to practise law in Saskatchewan, I am writing to you in my personal capacity, not as a legal counsel for any client. In fact my personal views may conflict with the personal views of some of my clients, but the importance of the issue I will outline in this correspondence outweighs those concerns.

I am also a member of a law firm, and I am not acting in any capacity for my firm. This is entirely personal correspondence. As well, I am honorary consul for Finland in Saskatchewan, but I am writing to you in my personal capacity, not as honorary consul for Finland in Saskatchewan.

I am also a published author, father of three children aged 8, 12, and 14, and husband to an immigrant wife that has a busy career at a multinational mining company in Saskatoon. I am not writing to you on their behalf either. This is personal correspondence from myself as a lawyer practising laws for more than two decades. I have worked and studied abroad in many countries, and advised many

clients from outside Canada and Canadian businesses working abroad. I am not writing to you on their behalf either.

Although I do have a good understanding of how laws work across borders, I have my own views which I steadfastly adhere to, but I am not overtly ideological. I do not have a political agenda and have not been involved with politics in the past. However given recent developments, I felt compelled to share my views on this government's proposed use of the notwithstanding clause.

Section 33 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is part of the Constitution of Canada, the Charter. Section 33, the notwithstanding clause, allows provincial legislatures to temporarily override sections 2 and 7 to 15 of the Charter. Section 33 is unique among the constitutions of countries with constitutional democracies.

Other constitutional democracies like the United States do not have a similar notwithstanding clause, and so great care should be taken when legal concepts from countries like the USA are presumed to be law in Canada. Legal concepts like parental rights are not a legal principle in Canada. The concept of parental rights is a US legal principle which is most often cited as originating from the United States Supreme Court case of *Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57 (2000). Decisions of the United States Supreme Court are not applicable in Canada, nor are the other laws of the United States defining parental rights. Therefore use of the notwithstanding clause to enforce rights which do not explicitly exist in Canada seems contrary to common sense.

The notwithstanding clause does not create new rights for provinces, but rather it may suspend certain rights of Canadian citizens. Namely the use of the notwithstanding clause may suspend the right to life, liberty, and security of person, section 7; suspend security against unreasonable search or seizure, section 8; suspend the right not to be arbitrarily detailed or imprisoned, section 9; suspend the right to be informed of reasons for detention and retain legal counsel, section 10; suspend the right to be tried in a reasonable period of time, section 11; suspend the right not to be subjected to any cruel and unusual treatment, section 12; suspend the right to avoid self-incrimination, section 13; suspend the right to assistance of an interpreter in legal proceedings, section 14; and suspend the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination, and in particular without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability, section 15.

Invoking the notwithstanding clause deprives people in Saskatchewan of these fundamental rights. Use of the notwithstanding clause takes away freedom from Saskatchewan people. It does not provide freedom.

[21:15]

Courts in democratic countries play a crucial role in maintaining freedoms of individuals. Courts protect against government interference in the daily lives of Canadian citizens. To state that a decision of a judge in a

Saskatchewan court constitutes judicial overreach is simply incorrect. It is the very role of judges and courts to ensure that governments work within the four corners of the law.

We are setting a dangerous precedent if provincial governments in Canada can enact whatever law they choose irrespective of the rulings of the courts. The courts must remain independent of governments and able to interpret laws put in place by governments. This is the bedrock of democratic institutions in Canada.

My concern on the proposed use of the notwithstanding clause is shared by the Canadian Bar Association and Saskatchewan Trial Lawyers Association. There are a number of lawyers in this government who I can only assume share the concerns of the broader legal profession with this government's proposed use of the notwithstanding clause.

All lawyers and firms in Saskatchewan should be concerned about this government's proposed use of the notwithstanding clause because it undermines the legitimacy of the rule of law by suspending the fundamental rights of citizens. Lawyers are at the forefront of creating and interpreting rights and obligations conveyed through the law. A shift of power from the legal system to a provincial government undermines the ability of lawyers to comply with law.

To the extent external legal counsel will need to be retained by the government to respond to rulings from courts related to the use of the notwithstanding clause, as a taxpayer in Saskatchewan, I would question whether the use of public money gathered from taxpayers should be used to fund these external law firms.

This government should give some consideration to the expense and time required to litigate a constitutional matter of this magnitude in advance of invoking the notwithstanding clause. I suspect that certain groups advocating for the rights of taxpayers will also join in the opposition to the use of the notwithstanding clause when and if it becomes clear that public money will be used to pay for the external legal services required to litigate.

I would suggest this government have a second look at whether pushing forward with the application of the notwithstanding clause to secure parental rights makes the most sense for both the rural and urban folks in Saskatchewan.

At times like this, when fundamental democratic rights of the people of Saskatchewan are starting to be challenged, the important role of an official opposition in holding a government accountable becomes obvious. Therefore I appreciate the willingness of the official opposition to advance my concerns in the legislature.

All people of Saskatchewan, from all walks of life, will benefit from an open dialogue and a clearer understanding of what is at stake with the proposed use of the notwithstanding clause by this government.

Signed by

Yours truly,

Chad Eggerman, B.A., LL.B., LL.M., PMP,
QPJM Saskatchewan, honorary consul for
Finland in Saskatchewan

I want to thank Mr. Eggerman for taking the time to provide that thoughtful letter to be read into the record here this evening, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This next letter is from a parent. She also identifies as an ally and a Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] student. Her name is Kandice Margaret Parker.

I was born in Saskatoon. I grew up in Saskatoon, and after travelling and working abroad in my 20s, I came back to live and raise a family in Saskatoon. I am now 40 years old, and I am a parent of two wonderful kids.

My 11-year-old son is kind and is a leader. He attends the SAGE program for gifted students, and he is an amazing soccer player. My two-year-old daughter already has a great sense of humour and loves attending storytime at our public library.

My partner and myself are both educators. My partner is an instructor at Sask Polytechnic. Right now I am working to finish up my Ph.D. in the psychology of culture, health, and human development at the University of Saskatchewan while teaching a second-year class on child developmental psychology.

I'm writing today because I am vehemently opposed to the Saskatchewan Party's parental inclusion and consent policy. Our provincial leaders are employing language that connotes reason and common sense to fuel a movement that disregards evidence, expert knowledge, and the lived experiences of marginalized members of our society.

I deeply understand this tactic, as my dissertation research involved interviews with men and women leaders, C-suite-level persons of influence in Saskatchewan, on issues of gender equality. This work has provided me with valuable insight as to how status quo narratives persist and bestow power and influence.

The parental inclusion and consent policy is about power and control over status quo conceptions of how we are allowed to exist and what is deemed to be pathological. This mirrors Canada's historical and ongoing patriarchal colonialism. Beliefs about the superiority and goodness of status quo white-men leadership are deeply embedded in Canadian social consciousness. This ultimately justifies traditionally masculinized ideological and political leadership, exclusive of feminized, racialized, and queer others.

This policy is emboldening parents that are fighting to deny their children knowledge about the existence of 2SLGBTQIA+ persons. This is exclusive, regressive, and pure bigotry. There is no nice way to position this policy.

On September 20th of this year, I attended the counterprotest at the so-called March 4 Children in favour of the parental inclusion and consent policy in Saskatoon. Although some of these protesters claimed to not be haters, their protest was full of hateful rhetoric and signage, including narratives that pathologize gay men and transgender persons. Notably many of these protesters were the age of my parents, in their 60s, and the few that I engaged with had never before had a conversation with a queer person.

There was a video that went viral online of a young boy in Calgary that was brought on stage, also on September 20th, and he said that gay persons were psychopaths and disgusting, and the crowd cheered. This group argues that this is not an example of hate because the leader that brought him on stage said something like, no, we respect the LGBT community but we ask not to be indoctrinated.

But then I ask, how did this boy learn this hateful rhetoric? And what do you mean by indoctrination? Queer and trans people exist and have always existed all over the world, regardless of the fact that their existence has been and in some places continues to be outlawed. Also regardless of the fact that queer and trans people continue to endure extreme prejudice and discrimination — including disproportional rates of violence and murder — I always want and will always vote for an inclusive Canada, an inclusive Saskatchewan in which everyone, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexuality, or gender identity can feel safe and respected and contribute in meaningful ways to our society.

This policy contradicts an inclusive and safe Canada and makes me feel ashamed of my province and pain for all those families that are impacted by the anti-queer, anti-trans rhetoric that the Saskatchewan Party's parental inclusion and consent policy emboldens.

According to the most recent research, approximately 10 per cent of the Canadian population identifies as 2SLGBTQIA+. By some estimates 2SLGBTQIA+ youth make up between 25 and 40 per cent of homeless youth in Canada. Approximately one out of every three homeless young people in Canada identifies as 2SLGBTQIA+. Our whole world is so intensely hegemonic and heteronormative.

In attending that counterprotest on September 20th, those supporting the Saskatchewan Party's parental inclusion and consent policy — who were largely representing a religious view or a senior citizen conservative — said that children are being groomed in schools and are not . . . too innocent and young to learn about gender. In their narratives, they are implying that learning about sexual and gender diversity lends to increased sexual and gender diversity.

This is not the case. If children were so susceptible to being conditioned through knowing about sexuality and gender, there would certainly be no gay or trans people, as heteronormativity in our culture clearly outweighs any queerness in our culture. Queer and trans kids have always existed, and they will always exist. You can't ignore and

deny them out of existence.

But you can make their lives even more difficult than it already is. And this is what the Sask Party's parental inclusion and consent policy is doing to children who fail the status quo. It is bullying. Failing the status quo should be seen as interesting, beautiful, and a gift that expands our perceptions and understanding of life and what is true and possible. Instead, those who fail the status quo are policed into feeling disempowered, unnatural, sick, and like a joke.

I have parented two sexes of children now, as I have one boy and one girl. When I was pregnant with my now 11-year-old son, I remember thinking that I would like to raise him to be anti-sexist and not hypermasculine. This task is near impossible. Every interaction with my little boy was directing hegemonic masculinization. Oh, what a strong, handsome boy. You're so brave. Boys don't cry. Do you have any girlfriends? Don't be such a mama's boy. Pink is for girls.

Representations of masculinity in the media revere strong, muscular superhero men alongside their objectified, big-breasted and small-waisted supermodel woman love interests. Even when shopping for clothes for my two-year-old daughter I am forced to sort through crop tops, low-neck shirts and tight clothes. We start to sexualize and normalize and police sexual, sexist norms from birth, and these are seen as common sense and are largely unquestioned.

At the same time, Statistics Canada reports that one in four girls in Canada experience sexual abuse. So-called common-sense gender norms don't equate to a healthy and safe society for all.

[21:30]

I dare you to imagine growing up queer and being brave enough to explore who you are, what you love, and what makes you feel like you, amidst the powerfully heteronormative forces in our culture. You may have no idea. But as leaders, you have the responsibility to inform yourselves.

In my Ph.D. work, I studied gender. I have studied gender specifically for over a decade now. I am an expert on gender. The narratives of Saskatchewan's leaders who are pushing parental inclusion and consent policy are ignorant, uninformed, and to me embarrassing. All children deserve to be safe. Who disagrees with this?

In my child development psychology course at the University of Saskatchewan, I explore research that examines children and resilience. Research indicates that many children experience risk factors that hinder healthy development. This may include factors such as malnutrition, community disruption, discrimination, housing, inequity, and racism.

What fosters resilience in children who experience risk factors are protective factors. Schools and teachers are consistently found to be among the strongest protective factors for children, mitigating the negative influence of risk

factors and providing the support and safety that allows children to thrive in cases where they would have otherwise not thrived.

The parental inclusion and consent policy is working to deny trans kids very important protective factors. Scott Moe and his team are assuming with this policy that parents are always protective factors for their children. This is not the case. Unfortunately home life and parents are too often risk factors for their children that impede the safety and healthy development of children.

Our society has been, to a degree, built to offer safe spaces to children so that even those experiencing risk factors are able to access the proper safety and support needed to thrive, either in schools, churches, or community organizations. We shouldn't take this away from any children, especially trans kids who are already experiencing high levels of discrimination and face unsupportive environments at home and society. Further, the Saskatchewan Party with its parental inclusion and consent policy has made societal narratives into a stronger risk factor for trans kids and their families.

I dare the Sask Party to ask trans kids how they are doing and how they are feeling in our province right now. I dare you. I promise you that they are not feeling well. Shame on the Saskatchewan Party for bullying children and emboldening bigots who zealously share misinformation about trans people and their experiences.

Shame on the Saskatchewan Party for cherry-picking bigoted and officially disgraced, so-called experts to support the parental inclusion and consent policy such as Dr. Erica Anderson who propagates wild and unproven claims, including that young people are transitioning because its trendy or because of peer influence and social contagion. Dr. Anderson's diseased model of gender diversity is widely disputed by experts and organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Shame on the Sask Party for allowing such a so-called expert to support the trampling of children's rights to safe and inclusive spaces. Shame on the Saskatchewan Party for encouraging misinformation, such as myths about gender-affirming care, and normalizing hate-fuelled and divisive rhetoric. This government is successfully working to divide and conquer, and this is bad-faith politics, shameful and embarrassing.

But she goes on:

Next I would like to address the reasonable and centrist ethos of the narratives that the Saskatchewan Party leaders employ in discussing and rationalizing the implementation of the parental inclusion and consent policy. The Saskatchewan Party push their narratives to the status quo by implementing language such as "common sense." This application of "common sense" helps them to perpetuate and uphold ignorant and misinformed narratives in support of status conceptions and practices that exclude and marginalize those who fail gender norms.

The Saskatchewan Party does not care how their supposedly common-sense conceptions and practices impact those who fail the status quo. I am very familiar with this style of hegemonic narrative, and it is a tale as old as time. We should all be very familiar with Canada's history of gender equality, civil rights, and Indigenous rights.

I am familiar with men leaders' conceptions of gender. From my Ph.D. work, the men leaders that I interviewed about gender equality positioned the influence of gender as fictitious or nullifiable and the issue of gender equality as inaccessible or not their responsibility. While the men leaders that I interviewed were very confident in their conceptualizations of gender equality, they simultaneously failed to acknowledge how gender is embedded in norms and structures and did not situate themselves within their conceptualizations.

Notably, men leaders' views were inconsistent with the women leaders that I interviewed. Women leaders asserted that men leaders mostly fail to implement effective influence toward gender equality due to a lack of sincerity and failure to understand and focus on matters of gender equality. Most women leaders argue that persisting gender inequalities are unacceptable and definitely not good enough.

Unlike the men leaders that I interviewed, women leaders, regardless of whether they positioned themselves as aligned with or divergent from hegemonic masculine norms, shared narratives that demonstrated how they have been forced to navigate the sexist structures and beliefs in society and in the workplace to evade penalties and negative perceptions.

My research shows that men leaders in particular, along with some women leaders, are failing to acknowledge and understand biases such as stereotypes that assign certain traits as inherently and permanently masculine or feminine. The parental inclusion and consent policy evidences how leaders, as I demonstrate in my thesis work with issues of gender equality, are failing to name and understand issues related to gender.

The Saskatchewan Party has deeply failed to acknowledge and understand the biases that we have internalized about sex and gender, and how these biases shape the lived experience of youth who do not conform to heteronormative and cisnormative conceptions.

I have heard again and again, by those who support the parental inclusion and consent policy, that there is no such thing as gender. What is so scary about gender? Throughout history and across cultures, conceptions of masculinity and femininity are inconsistent. There is something inherent that all persons feel about gender that they may or may not identify with. And there are aspects of gender that are performed. In travelling to many countries, my conceptions of gender have been challenged.

Gender is not the same as sex. And so-called common-sense binary conceptions of gender and sex are not so common upon examining historical and contemporary variations and exceptions. We all have the responsibility to question what

we may believe to be common sense, and should all be concerned with nurturing the safe and healthy development of children without forcing and policing children's obedience to colonialist and outdated restrictive conceptions of sex and gender.

A moderate bothsidesism approach to 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion imparts equal validity to opposing viewpoints, including views that pathologize and strip human rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ persons. So-called common-sense, middle-balanced interpretation of complaints about so-called indoctrination is unacceptable and destructive. We must reconfigure the middle in conceptualizing progress towards human rights. 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusivity, the acknowledgement of the existence of sexual and gender-diverse human beings and student curriculum should not be up for debate.

Those who oppose teaching sexual orientation and gender identity position gender as destructive and as an abusive force that harms children. To the hands off our children movement, gender denies nature, threatens masculinity and patriarchy, and threatens our civilization. This fight against a so-called ideology of gender is violent and works to maintain a patriarchal norm in which feminized and marginalized identities and performances are devalued and objectified.

This is not a middle-ground issue. There is no middle approach to appreciating the existence and well-being of real human beings. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. famously opposed moderatism in his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." And I quote:

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have also reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council-er or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to order than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with you with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a more convenient season. Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

That is from King, 1963.

To those of you who may believe you are being reasonable and moderate or may be working to appease both sides, I urge you to consider the violence produced through your moderatism as outlined by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Saskatchewan Party's catering of the freedom convoy parental rights movement is an outright rejection of the

rights of trans youth and is fuelling a divided society and regressive political culture in which facts and expertise are considered irrelevant.

The enforcement of the idea that gender does not exist and only two sexes exist stems from the entrenchment of gender in global power hierarchies, including masculinized organizational norms in which men continue to dominate in positions of leadership.

[21:45]

A heterosexist gender hegemony, propelling and justifying racialized gender violence, has been instrumental to histories of imperialism and globalization. Political superpowers and imperialist projects are attributed legitimacy through the violent imposition of Western men's superiority as a hegemonic form of masculinity. María Lugones, 2008, an Argentine professor of comparative literature and women's studies, describes this imposition as a construction of collective authority — page 16 — that is maintained through competence, reason, maturity, and civility as defined by the Western modern/colonial gender system.

Positioning 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusivity as a threat, something that supposedly damages the innocence of children, imitates imperialistic projects in which ideas about civility and gender were imposed as a means of gaining power over others, coercing the ways in which the youth and our society are allowed to exist and feel safe. Rhetoric about the so-called rights of parents in the face of the supposed potential threat of the 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusivity compels cultural hegemonic assumptions about supposed truths about gender and sex, dictating how we are allowing to construct our identities, relationships, societal structures, and supports. This fuels division, hatred, and is contrary to the nature of human lives, human rights, and human dignity.

I am so disheartened to have spent so much time thinking and feeling worried and stressed about this regressive, colonial, and unjust parental inclusion and consent policy. At the same time real, systemic injustices that are in dire need of attention, including issues of food security, housing, and domestic violence in our province have not grabbed the attention of the Saskatchewan Party. We need to move forward, not backwards.

Sincerely,
Kandice Margaret Parker

I want to thank Kandice Margaret Parker for taking the considerable time that she did to provide that summary based on her expert research as an academic at the University of Saskatchewan in gender studies. But I go on.

This next letter comes from a parent, an educator, and an ally.

My name is Robert Regier. I'm a parent of two kids, a husband, an uncle, a son of two schoolteachers, a coach of a boys' soccer team in Saskatoon, and a committed citizen within the Saskatoon community. I am also an educator at Sask Polytechnic and a teacher in training at the College of

Education at the University of Saskatchewan. This message communicates my opposition to the parental inclusion and consent policy introduced by the Saskatchewan Party in the summer of 2023.

On September 20th, 2023 I went to counterprotests at the so-called million-person march for children. I felt that I had to go in support of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Although there were many of us opposed to the million-person march, it was disheartening to see so many supporting the bigoted and hateful things said by those advocating for so-called parental rights. And it was clear that the individuals saying these bigoted and hateful things were emboldened by our current provincial government.

Without consulting with teachers, nor with students affected by these policy changes, the Saskatchewan Party has made decisions on behalf of students, implicating teachers and schools in a politicized situation that effectively diminishes the safety of vulnerable kids, especially queer and trans youth. The parental inclusion and consent policy normalizes hatred of 2SLGBTQIA+ kids and, by extent, people in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. This policy was generated in an authoritarian manner that does not represent the majority of parents or children. The child rights advocate was not consulted by the provincial government, and it is clear that the human rights of children was never a concern for the current government.

The quality of education and the overall well-being of school communities was not considered when the Sask Party made this decision.

Education is a powerful tool for shaping attitudes and fostering a sense of community, but it seems that the Sask Party intends to introduce divisive and intolerance in an effort to win votes. While it has always been crucial that we use education to promote diversity, inclusivity, and equal treatment for all individuals, the Sask Party renders schools into a place where hate and exclusive policies exist.

Let us collectively strive for a more compassionate and equitable society that values every person's right to dignity, respect, and fairness. I will stand up to the Sask Party's inclusionary and authoritarian methods, just as I will stand up to the so-called parental rights supporters that spoke on September 20th.

One of the main speakers at this event referred to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community as sick and that we should pray for them. "We need to support this government to ensure that this new policy . . ." the speaker continued, and it was clear that it is the individuals with these types of views that our current provincial government seeks support from.

It was at this same event that I caught sight of a former schoolteacher from when I was in grades 3 and 4. This teacher is an old man now, and he was there with his son, whom I also recognized, in support of these anti-inclusive speakers. I felt sad and nauseated. How could my former schoolteacher support hateful views like these?

For weeks since that day, I have thought back on myself as

a child in grade 3 and 4, and I have wondered what it may have been like if one of my peers had needed to confide in an adult with a concern or a question about sexual health or needing to tell a trusted adult about experiencing sexual or physical abuse. What if such a student experienced abuse by a family member?

As a supporter of so-called parental rights, would my former grade school teacher feel it his duty to report this to the parents? What if the parents were the problem? In the case of the abuse of a child, isn't it true that experts such as school counsellors and sexual health educators and authorities such as police or social services should be notified before parents?

And what about age-appropriate sex education? How can a parent be better at teaching kids about sex than health experts? Respect must be of foremost concern in all education, and the Sask Party's policies are not building a respectful educational environment.

It is disheartening to witness policies that infringe upon the fundamental rights and dignity of transgender students. It seems insane that members of a government would need to be reminded that every individual, regardless of gender identity, deserves to be treated with respect, understanding, and fairness. Discrimination in any form is contrary to the principles of equality and human rights that our society should strive to uphold. But the Sask Party undoes human rights and does their dirty work in schools, risking the well-being of children, particularly trans kids.

Transgender students face numerous challenges, including prejudice, bullying, mental health disparities, and an increased risk of self-harm. Instead of fostering an environment of understanding and support, these policies only serve to further marginalize and isolate an already vulnerable group of young individuals. By promoting these discriminatory policies, we risk perpetuating ignorance and fostering a culture of intolerance, hindering the growth and development of our future generations. The parental inclusion and consent policy needs to be struck down immediately.

I want to thank Robert Regier for taking the time to submit his remarks, and the opportunity to read them into the record here this evening.

I'm almost out of time, Mr. Speaker, but I want to try to get maybe one or two more in before that. This comes from a parent and grandparent and a retired educator of 30 years.

Dear Erika:

First I want to thank you sincerely for everything you are doing and will continue to do to protect our most vulnerable children.

When I read the editorial in yesterday's *Globe and Mail*, I cried tears of frustration. As a parent, grandparent, and retired teacher of 30 years, I have been for years now so incredibly disappointed in the Sask Party's government's attempts to kill our public education system. But for them to

sink to the level of stripping rights from children is truly unforgivable.

I am quite sure that every teacher, like me, has had experience with supporting children and youth who are struggling with their gender identity and/or sexuality. In a small province like ours, it is important to protect the identity of young people who have been targeted by members of their families and churches. I taught at least a dozen queer kids over the course of my career, only two of whom felt comfortable enough coming out. They are now all adults, including the one who told me he probably would not have survived his adolescence without my support.

The fact that Scott Moe doesn't understand this reality proves his ignorance. His threatened use of the notwithstanding clause proves his cruelty. Sorry but I don't know how else to say this.

Thank you for everything you do to support our children in schools.

That letter from a retired educator, parent, and grandparent, and I thank them for taking the time to write in to me. I think I'm going to read one more. This last letter comes from an ally.

Stephen Urquhart, Ph.D.
Professor, University of Saskatchewan
October 10th, 2023

Dear Members of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly:

This policy will create a grave threat to vulnerable Saskatchewan youth. The announcement and messaging around this policy has already encouraged a backlash that has further marginalized queer and trans people in Saskatchewan. Not just youth, but queer and trans people of all ages. Using the notwithstanding clause to pre-emptively shield legislation that will negatively impact vulnerable youth from judicial oversight is wrong.

Policy must consider the best interests of children, and these considerations must be based on evidence. To fully consider the implications and impact of the legislation, I urge you to hear from experts, such as Saskatchewan's Advocate for Children and Youth, the commissioner of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, others with expertise in family and human rights law, and the lived experience of queer and trans people. Please do not rush your review.

[22:00]

Please do not invoke the Charter's notwithstanding clause. Laws impacting children and youth must always remain open to review by the courts. Please carefully consider the legislation that is before you this week. Saskatchewan is and should be a place where we protect our most vulnerable.

Sincerely,
Stephen Urquhart, Ph.D.
Professor, University of Saskatchewan

Also cc'd Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission and Lisa

Broda, Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Rosemont. Rosemont, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're, you know, into the later hours of the evening here, into the debate here, Mr. Speaker.

What I want to say here, most importantly, is just to recognize all the incredible people, all the incredible organizations, all those that have spoken out, that have risen up, that have shared their experience, in many cases so damned courageously — more courage than most of us demonstrate, you know, within our lives — shared in many of these letters and in their expressions and the way they've spoken up against a government that's really lost the plot, Mr. Speaker, a government that's really fallen out of touch, and a government that's just not in it for the right reasons, Mr. Speaker, anymore. A serious departure of what a government is supposed to be all about, Mr. Speaker.

So like I say, I want to say thank you. And I want to commend the people, the leaders, the children, the students, the young adults, the adults, those through various faith communities that have spoken up, the teachers, the allies, the organizations, Mr. Speaker, from corner to corner to corner in this province, for speaking out and calling out a government that is selling them out, Mr. Speaker, a government that's not acting in their interests, Mr. Speaker.

Now I want to recognize as well some of those that are helping tell that story, some of those that are part of fighting for justice, Mr. Speaker, and those are my colleagues. And I've sat here for a long time listening to some incredible speeches. I've watched members of this official opposition say no, we're not going to let that heavy-handed, big majority government that's lost the plot steamroll democracy and sell out the rights of kids, to regressively walk back human rights in this province. No way. We're going to do all we can within the rules and the truncated period of time that we're dealing with this. This opposition and this leader and the members have said we will do all we can to give voice to the injustice of this government, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to identify a couple of folks in that. Obviously our incredibly able House Leader, the member from Douglas Park, who fought against the rule changes of this government. Of course we have the government opposite that, you know, are pulling the fire alarm and recalling the legislature like we have some sort of emergency with pronouns going on, Mr. Speaker, and then trying to short-circuit the process even further with rule changes, Mr. Speaker. And of course they've got the big majority to do it and they can laugh and guffaw while they do it, Mr. Speaker. But they're trampling on the democratic process while they trample on the human rights of Saskatchewan people. And our House Leader made that case so darned well.

And I think of the member for Saskatoon Eastview, the Education critic in this province, who stands up day in, day out, working with the people of this province and the education sector and parents and students and teachers and boards to fight for classrooms, to make sure they have the funding and supports that they need, Mr. Speaker, to make sure we have the education system that this province deserves and that every kid in this

province deserves, Mr. Speaker, so they can live up to their full potential which allows us to live up to our full potential as a province. And I watched that member take to the floor of this Assembly with purpose and with passion and with reason and with smarts and with the support of so many people through this province who are connected to that important work. And I was in awe, Mr. Speaker, watching him make that case.

Through to the member from Saskatoon Fairview sitting just over from me right now, our deputy leader, our Health critic that stands up for fixing a health system that's broken and that's been pushed into decay by a government who's disrespected those that work in it and disrespected the importance of that health system, from emergency rooms to rural and remote care to mental health and addictions services which, you know, obviously have a very important part in this entire conversation about vulnerable youth in this province. And I watched her make that case as well.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I watched our two brand new members in this Assembly rise to their feet like vets, with purpose and strength, Mr. Speaker, and speak longer than, you know, I think I've seen many of those members ever speak for in this Assembly, bring more words to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, fighting for their constituents in the province that they love, Mr. Speaker, and doing so with such great effect.

The new member for Regina Coronation Park, Mr. Speaker, who gave just a beautiful set of remarks in his maiden speech, knitting together the story of his life and how that connects to Coronation Park and this great province, Mr. Speaker. Speaking about the hope of this province, Mr. Speaker, and of course calling out the wrong-headedness of this government with this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

You know, and it struck me in his remarks the question he left. He said, you know, when a government decides they can just unilaterally push aside someone's rights, the question is, who's next? He identified that this is a slippery slope and it sure is, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And he said very specifically, who's next? Is it the newcomers, Mr. Speaker? Who's next when we're talking about rights, Mr. Speaker? And we have many marginalized communities in this province that are likely asking those questions right now.

The member for Walsh Acres, just a brilliant teacher and a thoughtful guy and can bring a message like few others, Mr. Speaker, spoke with purpose in his seat like a vet, like he's been doing this for years, Mr. Speaker — with conviction, making that case and closing the argument, laying out those facts around mental health, that we know that trans youth are seven times more likely to act on suicide, seven times more likely.

And then he lays out the stark reality that the number one killer, the number one cause of death for young people in this province ages 15-24 — suicide. Do the math. Right, Mr. Speaker? That's what he called on us, and then he called on us to do better. He called on the other side to recognize that it's not too late to change this legislation, to walk away from this ill-conceived battle, Mr. Speaker, to do right by the people of this province in face of an action that a Justice has said could cause irreparable harm. Laid out very plainly by the member from Walsh Acres.

To the member for Saskatoon Nutana, who got up just now and

shared many submissions that had come in to her, sharing the voice of many that she represents and being a part of this — and I hope I'm not being inappropriate in sharing at a time where she's suffering loss herself — makes her way into this legislature when many others would be mourning, and with others is here fighting for the people she represents and for justice and fairness in this province. Shout-out to the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

And I didn't leave him out. I saved him till the last, the first out member of this legislature, a teacher, a business person, someone who is just an incredible human being. The member for Meewasin, who identified that he's a member of this community as a gay man, and identifying that he's the first gay man out and elected in a role as a member of the legislature and identified to everyone that no, you're not going to pull out the LGBT2S+ and piece this out and pit people against each other. He said, this is the queer and trans community, and this is my community, he said. And he said, I won't let one member of my community be hurt, and we stand together. And I thought gave some of the most thoughtful remarks in this legislature that came from his heart, and that were a testament to what service could and should look like in this province, certainly in 2023, Mr. Speaker.

So I want to say thank you to all the people who have spoken out and who have called out a government who thought, you know, they were just going to have a bit of a political stunt here, I think, at the expense of some people, Mr. Speaker. Well those people have some allies, and those people have a whole bunch of allies in this province, and this official opposition is damned proud to fight back with the people of this province against a government that's not only out of touch but advancing in a very dangerous way in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I shared the other day with a few folks that, you know, a friend of mine shared with me on Monday he had been moving grain with his 70-something father down in the Pangman-Ogema area. And they were chatting and they had Gormley on. And then his dad turned it off and said, I don't want to hear any more of this. I guess it was covering a story about this legislation that this Premier and this government have brought. And he says, I'm so sick of it, when you look at what's going on in our world today.

And just look at what's going on in our world today, folks. Look at what's going on in our world today. And then he says, and then when you look at the things that a government should be responsible for here in Saskatchewan, he says I'm just so tired of it; the government needs to stick to the basics.

But not these guys, Mr. Speaker. They've changed. And we're hearing from a whole bunch of folks that had placed trust and votes with this government that they're not having any of this, that this isn't what they voted for. A recall of the legislature for an emergency on pronouns? Like it's as bizarre as it sounds, Mr. Speaker.

As we have everything going on in our world today, and then we have all the real issues that Saskatchewan people rightly deserve action on. From cost of living, Mr. Speaker, that's crushing so many families across this province. Through to fixing health care, making sure whatever riding we're representing that those that need health care are able to find it where and when they need it, Mr. Speaker. Through to housing. Through to mental health

and addictions services. Through to making sure that all seniors in this province have a dignified, safe home, supports around home, but that those 63 seniors in the Lutheran care home aren't going to be displaced from their home and that home shut down and the hundred-plus workers out of jobs, Mr. Speaker.

These are far greater emergencies. These are matters that we should be acting on and that we should be dealing with in this legislature, Mr. Speaker. But certainly not the actions we see of this government, the so-called emergency around pronouns.

Mr. Speaker, this discussion, you know, connects to education on so many fronts. And you know, our classrooms are at a breaking point in so many situations. We've had the numbers laid bare around funding and the cuts of this government and the damage to those classrooms. That's the kind of issue that we should be acting on, Mr. Speaker. But after years of disrespect and underfunding for the education sector and for students and parents and school boards and teachers, we have an education system that's hurting. But the big priority for this government are pronouns, Mr. Speaker.

[22:15]

You want to talk about parental involvement in education? How about a fair class size? A reasonable class size that allows those incredible teachers to work and communicate in a really good way with a reasonable number of parents who are engaged deeply in the learning, Mr. Speaker. How about making sure we're supporting things like community schools, which of course were gutted, scrapped by the current government, Mr. Speaker? How about instead of cutting school community council supports, how about supporting that effort and recognizing how important it is, Mr. Speaker?

How about making sure we're addressing all those other conditions and factors external to the classroom that are placing such a heavy burden on parents and families right now, that limit their ability to be involved in all the ways that they want to and deserve to be, Mr. Speaker? Situations that directly take out of the quality of life of Saskatchewan people.

It wasn't long ago that we were known as a beacon of human rights leadership in Saskatchewan. 1947, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*. The very first piece of legislation, the very first code in North America, Mr. Speaker. This has been our history. This is something that Saskatchewan people are proud of. And to the government opposite I'd say, wake up. Saskatchewan isn't Florida or the deep US, and we're not looking for some sort of MAGA [Make America Great Again] movement, you know, with Trumpian acts like we see here, Mr. Speaker.

The people of Saskatchewan are compassionate and common sense, and they will reject that sort of politically motivated activity at every turn especially when it turns on one another. Especially when it sells out the rights, it scraps the rights of kids and the human rights in this province, Mr. Speaker.

You know we see this province so often punch well above its weight on so many fronts: leadership in education, social innovation, in agriculture, in mining. There are so many things we do so well. Human rights were one of those things as well,

Mr. Speaker. An area that, you know, we — don't get me wrong — that we need to continue to march forward with progress, Mr. Speaker.

What are the headlines now today though? What are the headlines today? Well I saw *The Guardian*, international news, and *The Guardian* is weighing in on this regressive political stunt of this Premier that's walking back human rights in this province.

I'm an avid reader of *The Economist*, Mr. Speaker. *The Economist*, international publication that's pretty important, Mr. Speaker. Well guess what headline Saskatchewan garnered this week, Mr. Speaker? It wasn't a story about how we're responding to the war in Ukraine and providing the products that the world needs and displacing Russian fuel or making sure that a hungry world is feeding and that our grain is getting to market. It wasn't about getting potash to the world, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we have food security and global food security. It wasn't about getting our energy products to the world in face of these challenges. And it certainly wasn't a story of human rights advances, Mr. Speaker.

Condemned in *The Economist*, Mr. Speaker, is where this Premier put the province we love. Takes this very proud province and puts it in a position in an international publication like *The Economist* and brings us international shame because of the behaviours of his government. Let me be clear. That shame is not for Saskatchewan. That shame is for this government that are failing the people of this province, but in so doing they hurt this province. They hurt our economic and our social futures, Mr. Speaker.

You know, at a time where we want to recruit and retain on all fronts — we want newcomers, immigrants from all over the world to choose Saskatchewan and to build their lives here and we want them to stay here and we want them to contribute and build — we need to be known as a welcoming, inclusive province. You don't get there with this sort of behaviour, Mr. Speaker. You don't get there with that kind of headline in *The Economist*, Mr. Speaker.

At a time where we need to be securing talent and health care professionals and skilled people and capital and businesses to invest in Saskatchewan and build in Saskatchewan, you've got a government walking us in the other direction, Mr. Speaker.

But I think what's most awful about this whole stunt . . . I mean it's wasting of course all this money, Mr. Speaker, for us to be here. You know, we've an Education minister who can't back up claims and can't make the case to some pretty straightforward questions, Mr. Speaker, day in, day out here, spending all this money. But what I think what's most awful is at the end of the day a society is supposed to be judged as to how you treat the most vulnerable. Pretty basic measure, how you treat the most vulnerable.

And in this case, Mr. Speaker, we have a government that chose, because they thought it was in their political interest, that they'd pull the fire alarm and recall the legislature and ram forward in an undemocratic way a piece of legislation that takes away the rights, human rights of kids and casts question on the very identity of some of the very most vulnerable young people and people within this province.

We've already had identified that the LGBTQ2S+ community represents 40 per cent of the homeless community in Saskatchewan. They're at greater risk. We've had story after story as to why that's the case, Mr. Speaker. We've had hatred that many have been subjected to. Discrimination and abuse, Mr. Speaker. That's a reality that many of these young people in this community face.

And we have a government that, instead of just saying, "Hey, we're going to do our best to lighten the load a bit. We're going to do what we can to say, 'Hey, you matter. We want you here. We care for you. We love you. You belong. We want you to live a long life in Saskatchewan or wherever you take that wonderful life. But we want you to live up to your full potential.'"

Instead of a message like that, Mr. Speaker, we have an action like this that has — a minority of a minority — some of the very most vulnerable having their identity debated through the public and on the floor of this Assembly. And it's dog whistle politics that get pretty darned ugly. And "darned" is a very weak word when you see some of what's being said across this province right now. And you have a responsibility, as a government, to do better. To lighten the load.

These young people and those in this community, the queer and trans community, have dealt with enough bashing and hatred in their lives. I can assure you. We have the stories; we hear those experiences. All they need from government is someone who is going to work as a partner and an ally as best they can.

But instead we have a government . . . and I challenge the Premier here. A guy like him, myself as well, we're in pretty safe, comfortable, secure, privileged spaces in Saskatchewan. We should never be making life a greater challenge for some of the most vulnerable, especially when we look at how tragic it is for so many, Mr. Speaker. When you've got young people that are working through, at times, you know, what their identity is, how they fit into the world, and very tragically, if they even fit into the world. We need to do better. This is wrong, what we see from this government, Mr. Speaker.

We have heard from the Education minister a whole bunch of stuff that's just wild, just nonsense, you know, not defensible. I can't imagine he's going to be Education minister very long, and I sure hope he isn't, because the people of this province deserve better than that, Mr. Speaker.

But when we talk about how vulnerable young people are, Mr. Speaker, of this community, we have to talk about the supports and, you know, what's there for mental health supports, what's there for the community. And we have a minister alleging in this legislature, there's ample supports. Well those that have shared their stories, those that are in touch with their communities, regardless of whether someone wrote a letter or not, would know that we just don't have the supports right now.

We don't have the mental health and addictions supports in our community. We don't have them in our schools, as identified by the member from Saskatoon Fairview, that we have one counsellor for every 3,000, guidance counsellors . . . no sorry, social counsellors in this province . . . One counsellor for 3,000 kids.

And we know in the broader community, those supports just aren't there as well. We know, all too often, and I know it for the people I represent when I have hard-working families and others reach out, seeking assistance, often reaching out at time of great darkness and despair for them or a loved one and looking for help, and those supports just aren't there in a timely way. They're often not barrier-free. And we're failing far too many in our community.

Yet this government thinks they can, you know, make bogus claims around ample supports around mental health in the classroom or in the community, at the same time as they walk back human rights, making people more vulnerable and, as the Justice says, cause irreparable harm.

Mr. Speaker, I'll share just a little bit, I would like to share some of the testimony, some of the letters that have come in to me. I've had tons. I won't be able to share all of the letters I've received. I was going to share the letter from Heather Kuttai, the commissioner of the Human Rights Commission, Mr. Speaker, that stepped down. I'll maybe be able to share that, maybe if I continue into the debate tomorrow. It's been shared by members, though. But it's scathing.

And to people like Heather Kuttai, thanks for your leadership. Thank you for your service for many years in this province. And thank you for taking a stand and your service and leadership in the moment. Mr. Speaker, the voice of people like Heather and the message that she sent is one that this government needs to listen to. But certainly the people of Saskatchewan are listening to that message.

I have a few letters I'd like to read.

Dear Mr. Wotherspoon:

I hope this letter finds you well. As a concerned citizen, a member of the LGBTQ+ community, and Government of Saskatchewan employee, I'm writing to express my deep apprehension about the recent decision to use the notwithstanding clause to force legislation that would require teachers to disclose students' desire to use different pronouns and names. I firmly believe that this utilization of the notwithstanding clause is not in line with its intended purpose, and it raises significant issues surrounding the rights and safety of our children.

First and foremost, the notwithstanding clause was designed to be a safeguard in our democratic system to be used sparingly and with the utmost caution. Its application should only be considered after a thorough and measured examination of a law's constitutionality. Rushing to invoke the notwithstanding clause without allowing for the necessary scrutiny demonstrates a worrying disregard for the principles of democratic governance and the voices of experts and the citizens it affects.

Having grown up in a conservative environment, I understand first-hand the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ youth. In many cases it is simply not safe for them to disclose a change in pronouns or names to their parents. My wife, for instance, contemplated taking her own life in high school due to the hostile environment at home. Being outed

to her parents would have exacerbated her situation, making it even more unbearable.

Schools often become the only refuge for these vulnerable children. To force teachers to disclose this information to parents as mandated by the proposed legislation would put these students at risk of harm and discrimination.

The argument that such legislation is intended to protect parents' rights is in my opinion a desperate and dangerous political ploy to curry favour with voters. Not all individuals who become parents are necessarily equipped or willing to provide a safe and supportive environment for their children, especially those who are LGBTQ+.

[22:30]

It is imperative that we prioritize the rights and safety of the child to decide whether it is appropriate and secure to disclose the pronouns or names. A parent's right to know what their child does at school should not supersede children's right to safety and self-determination.

As someone working for the Government of Saskatchewan, I must admit that I'm deeply ashamed that the current elected government is chipping away at the rights of our most marginalized citizens, particularly those in the LGBTQ+ community. Using the notwithstanding clause to override the Charter of Rights and Freedoms sets a dangerous precedent. It not only undermines the fundamental principles of our democratic system, but also places other rights, believed to be firm, in jeopardy. This slippery slope could erode the rights and freedoms that we have long fought for.

Our government's primary duty should be to ensure that all citizens, particularly the most vulnerable among us, are provided with a safe and inclusive environment to learn and grow. I implore you to reconsider the use of the notwithstanding clause in this context and allow for more comprehensive and considerate approach to address the concerns related to this legislation. It is only by promoting an open and empathetic dialogue, rather than by invoking extraordinary powers, that we create policies that truly serve the best interests of our society.

Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns. I hope you will give due consideration to the importance of protecting our children and fostering an inclusive and accepting environment for all.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Smith

Powerful words, Mr. Speaker, and I hope folks are listening. And thanks to Rebecca for using her voice. I have a lot of submissions here and I'm going to have to use excerpts on some of them, Mr. Speaker, to make sure.

I'll share some different pieces from a family that I know well. And I think they're one of the most amazing families I've ever come across, incredibly courageous and a beautiful story about overcome challenges, Mr. Speaker, that few of us could relate to

personally. I'll share pieces from a letter from the Johnsons.

Families like mine know the experience and the timelines for intervention better than anyone who had a hand in advising for the drafting of this proposed policy. This is not second-hand. This is not a friend of a friend. We didn't hear from a neighbour or read something on Facebook. There is no room to mince words. We just lived it and continue to. We know the hardship and the fear and the mixed emotions, the messy human feelings, the challenging family dynamics, the grief, the trepidation. But also some of us have the privilege of coming to know the joy, the whole spectrum of human emotions, and the journey.

They tell the story of their family and of Roy, incredible young person in this province. I wish I could share all this. This is from the letter still:

Anyone who pretends this is simple or clear has never had any skin in the game. And it's arrogant and heartless to speak so broadly on these deeply personal matters. Until it's your family, I don't want to hear it.

When this change was proposed, Roy and I talked about it. We had a heart-to-heart about what it would have been like if I found out from a school paper instead of from him directly that morning. Roy believes there would have been a twofold consequence of that hanging over his head: (1) his anxiety was so high, he would have just forged the signature if he needed to, or more likely (2) it would have gotten the best of his anxiety and been just another element in an already complicated and tricky situation to navigate. He would have just further delayed, extending his own suffering.

I'll go on further:

Roy's biggest concern of all were the kids whose parents would not be mentally or emotionally prepared and take this backlash out on their kids. For them he worries the most. Some people have been told that trans people are the work of evil and of demons. It's hard to reason in these instances when the basis of one's opposition is rooted in such beliefs.

I found support for Roy from my mother, but I have not told parts of my family out of love and protection for Roy. We continue to shield him where we need to.

She goes on:

I can understand the righteous indignation and, yes, anger that trans-affirmative and/or accepting families are feeling. No doubt you will hear that anger from some. And if you are quick to dismiss it as emotional nonsense, perhaps you ought to consider the nature of these blind spots you have and give some serious pause here. This is feeling more and more like it's actually about power.

Are you comfortable with these blind spots? Are each of the members present and voting also aware that these special interest groups are now reportedly seeking a publication ban? I'm happy to hear why that might be and how that inspires transparency, confidence, and trust on this critical

matter before the Chamber. How does that reflect on you and your vote today? Positively? No.

Importantly, have you met Roy? Have you asked him and the youth like him what the real implications are? If the answer is no to any of these questions, you are implored by common sensibilities to not proceed with the use of the notwithstanding clause. May wisdom prevail.

Respectfully submitted,
The Johnsons

Have you met Roy? Have you talked to those that are impacted? I don't think they have, Mr. Speaker. I'm certain that they haven't.

I remember, early in my days as an MLA, having the chance to sit down with some of the trans community and learn and listen, and had questions, Mr. Speaker. And you know what? I've watched the support and care for that community grow, just as I've seen it grow for the community, the queer and trans community.

It wasn't too long ago that we would go out for the Pride parade or some of those gatherings and there weren't that many people out. That wasn't that long ago. But, Mr. Speaker, that's changed. People come together. People stand by one another. And you know, when I think of Pride? Thousands upon thousands of people filling the streets of the city I represent in, Mr. Speaker, and showing love and care and respect for one another.

Another letter:

Hello, Trent and team:

My name is Janine, a queer resident of your riding, and I am writing today in hopes of reaching someone in government about the pronoun policy Scott Moe is recklessly moving forward with. I have reached out to the ministers of Education and Health as well the Premier's office on several occasions when I see concerning policies, and am always disheartened to get no reply or a canned response.

As a queer woman who came out at 24, I understand the impact this legislation will have on kids first-hand, and I wanted to share my story. I was raised on a rural grain farm in a Catholic family. I grew up hearing . . .

I won't share the derogatory, hateful words that she uses here. We've all heard them, and sadly I think we're hearing more of them right now in the province when you have actions of a government that, you know, offers a little bit of a signal that maybe some of that's all right.

I didn't understand why my family or adults around me hated so much, but they did. Anything different, anything odd was met with backlash or criticism. As a young teen I felt unsafe in my home. My voice did not matter around my alcoholic, misogynistic father or grandfather. I learned to keep things to myself. If I had come out as a child I fear my grandfather would have sent me to conversion therapy in accordance with his old-school beliefs. At the time I would have likely been ostracized from my church community, and

school would have been a living hell.

Looking back it doesn't surprise me that some part of me knew I couldn't come out yet, that I had to stay safe until I was an adult with resources and tools to ensure I would not be cast out or threatened for who I am.

When I did finally discover my queer identity at the age of 24, even then I had to make a detailed plan to tell my mother. I made an exit strategy like queer website articles told me to. Ensured I told safe people first and sought their advice about how to tell my family and when.

When the day came that I finally told my mother, whom I was living with to save money while I finished university, that I was dating a girl, around the supper table, I thought I was ready. I figured she may have some questions, but she was my mom. She'd love me as I am, right.

The days following my coming out were horrible. I will never forget the words my mother screamed at me, the homophobic rhetoric of "it's a phase," "didn't give birth to a gay child," and "you're going to lose all your friends now." I thought she would understand; she did not. Not for many years to come. Thankful, she is a woman who chose to overcome her intolerant beliefs and upbringing to love her daughter. My mom chose to see me, to love me, but it took a lot of work and healing together for many years after I came out.

I planned to live in my car with my pets at the age of 24. I thought I would be embraced or at least tolerated and here I was, alone, facing the idea of living through a Saskatchewan winter in my car. Twenty-four. You know, imagine being 9 or 13, telling a friend a new nickname you want to try or trying on their more masculine bunnyhug at the school and asking a teacher to call you Tom instead of Tina that day, writing your new nickname on your test with a smile, and you have an abusive, alcoholic father at home, like I did, who receives a call from the teacher. This is what's going to happen to kids. It could have happened to me.

I implore my government officials to not stand by this level of hate, far right grandstanding, bigotry, and political gaslighting that we're seeing happening today. We're not the US. We are a tolerant, accepting, friendly nation, and we the people of Saskatchewan do not need to feel scared for our lives. We're threatened by our government who will use the notwithstanding clause just whenever it suits them.

Please be steadfast in your opposition of this policy. Share my story. Share my voice. Share your voice. We deserve a united province led by a compassionate government who cares about its peoples' well-being. Not the current government who seems full of hate, self-serving greed, and intolerance towards the tiny minority of queer and trans folks who call this place home. To target and attack such a small percentage of the population, and children at that, is deplorable.

Thank you for taking the time to read. Feel free to share my story and experience if it helps Scott Moe to finally hear someone's first-hand experience. Read him the emails you

receive since he ignores his inbox so readily.

Thank you and take care,
Janine B.

Hi Trent:

I'm a Regina resident and would like to share this letter on how the use of the notwithstanding clause will affect me. My name is Amanda Frombach and I've been a Saskatchewan resident since my birth in the '90s. I grew up working on my family's farm in rural Sask, where we raised beef cattle and grew grain. I helped to build the new Mosaic Stadium, where our residents cheer on the Riders, as well as build schools and renovate the office towers of downtown Regina and a mall in Saskatoon. Now I help with the production of potash so that our farmers can grow their crops to feed Saskatchewan and the world.

My working life has been a critical cog in keeping the Saskatchewan economy going. And I wouldn't have been able to play my part if a pronoun regulation like this was recklessly pushed through during my childhood.

[22:45]

I knew that I was different from a young age. The other kids around me seemed to think and act differently than I did, but we all got along anyway. Once I reached my teen years I realized that I was attracted to other women, and that the different I always had been was despised by those who didn't understand. I had to listen daily to homophobic slurs used by my peers and my family. I had to endure knowing that if others knew who I was truly that they would react with violence, either physical or psychological.

I attempted suicide twice through the early years of understanding that to be queer in Saskatchewan was to be hated for no good reason. Luckily for me my two attempts failed. Luckily for me I had the chance to see our government pass marriage equality. Luckily for me I lived long enough to see and understand that even though some people may hate those they do not understand, there were others who thought queer people like me deserved not only to live without fear but also to thrive.

After the hope that marriage equality brought in 2005, I didn't feel the need to kill myself as strongly. Little by little my hope grew. If Canadians could hold love and respect for people like me, then maybe some of the people in my life could do that as well.

I first told a few select friends. Most were supportive and provided me understanding and compassion. As I neared high school graduation I called upon those friends to formulate a plan for my coming out on grad night. We organized that if my parents reacted with hate or violence that I would be safe staying at their homes in a rotation until I managed to get a job and place of my own. I had to make a plan with friends to be certain of a safe place to stay because I was not certain that my family would not react with hatred and violence.

I wish no child had to plan for a safe escape route upon their parents learning their identity, but that is the Saskatchewan that has been allowed to fester. If regulations such as pronoun disclosure to parents had been passed while I was in those fragile teen years, knowing who I was but knowing that I was unsafe, then I would not have made it to adulthood. I would have been another queer child who was taken by suicide.

We could be giving queer children hope and a future within Saskatchewan by expanding their rights and education to reflect who they are born as. But instead the Sask Party is choosing to steal their hope, to steal their lives.

I have 10 nieces and nephews spread through elementary and high schools now. I cannot stand the thought that if they choose to share who they are with a school official that made them feel safe, that the school official would then have to choose between their job and protecting my little people until they are ready to let their family know who they truly are inside.

If they feel safest telling a teacher who they are, then I want that teacher to keep their confidence and protect them. And I don't want them to lose their job for doing the right thing.

The use of the notwithstanding clause is asinine and reckless. It opens the door to further abuses of our rights as Saskatchewan residents by removing our rights under the Charter protections provided in sections 2 and 7 through 15.

I like the freedom to follow whatever religion I choose, section 2. I like the right to life, liberty, and personal security, section 7. I like the protection from unlawful search and seizure of my property, section 8. I like the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned, section 9. I like being ensured the chance to challenge the lawfulness of an arrest or detention, section 10. I like being presumed innocent until proven guilty, section 11. I like having the right to not be subjected to cruel and unusual treatment or punishment, section 12. I like that if I stand witness in a court proceeding, my testimony cannot be used against me in another court proceeding, section 13. I like having the right to an interpreter, section 14. Lastly I like having the right to protection against discrimination for my race, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, age, and mental or physical disability, section 15.

I like all my rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. And I am strongly against using the notwithstanding clause now and in the future on those rights. Keep your politics off our queer children, and keep your politics off our rights.

Sincerely,
A lifelong Saskatchewan resident who simply will not stand for this.

I'm writing you today as a person that attended K to 12 schooling in rural Saskatchewan, who vehemently opposes the proposed Parents' Bill of Rights that was introduced by the Sask Party government last week.

I am writing to you as someone who has struggled with mental health issues and trauma. I'm writing to you as someone who strongly believes that a teacher helped save my life. This letter will explore issues of suicide and trauma. If you are reading or listening to it being read, please take care of yourself and those around you. It's also one of the first times I've spoken about these experiences publicly. I'm doing so in the hopes that it can be a small part of Saskatchewan's democratic process where members of the government find the guts to do the right thing. More on that later.

On New Year's Eve in 2004, my friends and I received a phone call that one of our friends had attempted suicide. A few short days later we learned that she had passed away from her injuries. She was only 15.

The supports offered in the school immediately after my friend's death were abysmal. Crisis counsellors told us as a group that maybe bubble baths would help us grieve. The media swarmed students because this was the third youth suicide in this small town within a year. As the funeral passed and time went on, much like how the snow melts in the spring, attention to the situation also melted away. Within months it was back to normal with dance classes, basketball tryouts, and exams.

Except it was never back to normal for me. A history of mental illness in my family combined with the fresh, raw trauma meant that my creeping feelings of depression and grief were becoming more and more potent in my mind. These poisonous thoughts were telling me I was to blame or that it should have been me or that I would always feel that way, were getting harder and harder to ignore.

I continued to avoid dealing with my spiralling mental health because I was confused, afraid, and ashamed. Meanwhile my outwardly bubbly persona was becoming difficult to maintain. Teachers — you know, the adults I spend most of my time with — could notice that something was off.

Throughout my high school years there were many teachers that I considered to be both role models and friends. I would give them silly nicknames, barge into their classrooms wearing our high school mascot's costume to get a laugh, or work with them on student representative council to create a better atmosphere at school. I'm still in contact with some of them today over 10 years later.

As I festered, I finally made the brave decision to approach a teacher and try to explain a bit about what was going on inside my mind. Keep in mind that this was the first time, years after the initial trauma, I had verbalized my thoughts. Her reactions were both compassionate and professional. She listened to me cry and connected me with supports. While memories of that day are hazy — if you've been affected by trauma, you will understand that — I remember how her consistent presence during those moments made me feel safe, cared for, validated. I trusted her with my story.

What I'm trying to emphasize here is the importance of teacher-student relationships in times of introspection or

important discussions. While I'm cisgender and will never claim to have the experience of what transgender or gender-diverse youth go through, I hope this story stresses how vital it is to have supportive, safe, trusted adults in all walks of kids' lives.

Before any assumptions are made, let me clear a few things up. I have two loving parents, and actually consider my mom my best friend. If I had gone to her with my concerns, I have no doubt I would have been embraced with loving arms. This decision to approach a teacher first was one I made because it was one I felt the most comfortable with making at the time.

If there is a youth who is engaging in some self-exploration and discovery around their gender identity, I believe it should be their choice as to who they disclose those thoughts or decisions to. Sometimes even when there are healthy relationships within the home, students may choose to share with other trusted adults in their lives instead.

Now that I've shared this story with you all, I ask that my words not be twisted or used against me in any way, aware that my experience is not right or wrong. It's simply a description of the decisions I made and why I made them. If at any point I were in immediate danger, I have full confidence that the steps would have been taken to ensure my safety. Teachers are competent with their responsibilities.

Of course there are no guarantees that within the profession that all people will act according to policies. If there are situations where negative decisions are made by a professional, there should be appropriate recourse to address it. People within the helping professions bear a huge responsibility to those they serve; however if we were to eliminate those responsibilities, we would be prohibiting them from doing their jobs. All that is to say we should have trust in our teachers.

As I've mentioned, I came from a loving family. If this was not the case, and after I disclosed personal information to my teacher, I was forced to share that information with my parents, what would the consequences be that I would face? Not only would I be possibly in the most uncomfortable situation at best or dangerous situation at worst, the psychological effects of the betrayal of trust would result in more trauma.

Rates of mental distress for trans or questioning youth are already high, so why not add reason to increase them, right? It's abhorrent.

This goes on to share that:

I think the last point (6) needs to be repeated: "Every claim for loss or damage resulting from the enactment or implementation of this section or of a regulation or policy related to this section is extinguished."

What does that mean in accessible language? My interpretation is the following: if anything that happens as the result of this bill harms you, too bad. I cannot imagine

the cold calculation and disregard for well-being of vulnerable youth it would take to write and enact that. Quite frankly, it's alarming.

The Sask Party is fully aware that this bill will cause, as Justice Megaw stated, irreparable harm, yet still decided not only to push it through irresponsibly but is using procedural antics to ram it through without giving the public a chance to review, propose amendments, and effectively organize against it.

Perhaps the icing on this sour cake, which is important to mention, is that now also sexual assault centres — as the Saskatoon Sexual Assault & Information Centre — are banned from Saskatoon classrooms. It should be repeated in the legislature that Saskatchewan has the highest rates of intimate partner violence per province in Canada, yet information about consent, boundaries, and bodily autonomy are now being prohibited from being taught and discussed by the experts. Make it make sense.

I'm not a politician. However to me there are suspicious motives behind the introduction of this legislation.

She goes on to describe the actions of this government here being motivated politically by the rising up of the United Party and the member from Sask Rivers, and the poor showing in the by-elections, and selling out children along the way.

She goes on to say:

This behaviour is so shameful. When the Premier of a province targets a small and vulnerable group just to score political points, it makes me believe that there is nothing honourable about this politician. Period.

Outing kids to pander to a weakened base is despicable. I sincerely hope that Scott Moe and his conservative team will listen to the people of Saskatchewan who oppose these policies, and do the right thing. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Paige Kezima

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to continue to read into the record many more submissions. I'm cognizant of the time here tonight, so I will likely pick up doing that tomorrow, Mr. Speaker. But as folks go home to bed here tonight, Mr. Speaker, it's not too late to do the right . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — The time now being 11 o'clock, this Assembly stands adjourned until 09:00 tomorrow morning.

[The Assembly adjourned at 23:00.]

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