

THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

DEBATES and PROCEEDINGS

(HANSARD) Published under the authority of The Honourable Dan D'Autremont Speaker

N.S. VOL. 56 NO. 13A THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2013, 10:00

Combating Bullying

Mr. Forbes: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I understand we're going to hear something from this government on anti-bullying today finally. We debated in this House the wisdom of the government's decision to wait until Anti-Bullying Week to unveil its report so it could be part of a larger PR [public relations] exercise. Now the government obviously agreed to move up the release date of the report compiled by the Legislative Secretary by one whole business day, Mr. Speaker.

There are kids who are afraid to go to school today, Mr. Speaker, and there are kids in Saskatchewan right now being devastated by cyberbullying. So acknowledging the urgency of this situation and setting aside this afternoon's photo op, will the minister please tell this Assembly what actions will be taken immediately as a result of the work by the Legislative Secretary for anti-bullying?

The Speaker: I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite raises an important issue. I think bullying is a significant issue in our province, and we want to address it as quickly as we can. I can advise the House that the government will not be doing a formal response to the Legislative Secretary's report but will be accepting the recommendations and indicating that we're going to be moving ahead as quickly as we can on the recommendations. Some will come out virtually immediately; some will take a period of time to implement and develop protocols and that type of thing. We think it's something that we want to do as quickly and appropriate and effectively as we can. We also want to treat this as being an ongoing process as best practices are developed, and learn from things as they are taking place. But we appreciate the point that he's making.

The Speaker: I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre. Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps we can get some specifics. In April the official opposition asked this government to ensure that students, parents, and teachers could easily access

information on forming gay-straight alliances. Although an external link was put up on the ministry's website, which we appreciate as a small first step, the Premier was clear that further action to protect gay students from devastating bullying would just have to wait. On April 10th, responding to questions about GSAs [gay-straight alliance], the Premier told this House, and I quote:

With respect to resources that can come from this government or any other source related to government, funded by government, this is going to be part of what is going to be considered in terms of the work of the member for Fairview, the Legislative Secretary for the anti-bullying initiative.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister now confirm, will the government take more specific action to protect gay and transgendered students from bullying and ensure that they have a safe place in our Saskatchewan schools?

The Speaker: I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite raises the issue of gay-straight alliances and that is certainly part of the recommendations. We are going to ensure that the availability will be made by website to any members anywhere across the province. It is a commitment that we have made and it's on the website now.

Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed though that the members opposite chose not to make a formal submission. They had every opportunity to do that. The Leader of the Opposition said, I hear about it when I sit down with young people; I hear about it when I sit down with teachers; I hear about it when I sit down with parents; I hear about it from school boards. He's not sharing anything that he heard with us.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Regina Rosemont, virtually identical things: I hear about it when I sit down with young people, I hear about it with . . . [inaudible] . . . Mr. Speaker, if they wanted to show some leadership, they were out touring across the province during the summer months. They went to eight different places. And they have made absolutely no submissions, no input, Mr. Speaker. I'm frankly disappointed with the positions that they've taken, or lack of positions.