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## Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

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# DEBATES and PROCEEDINGS

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### Provision of Social Housing

**Mr. Forbes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Sask Party candidate in Lloydminster said she doesn't think the government has a role to play in social housing and it should be left up to the private sector. And we already know how the Minister of Social Services feels about housing. She doesn't even think there are desperate, homeless people in our province, and prioritizes her relationship with private developers over the needs of families.

So the Social Services minister probably agrees with the Sask Party candidate in Lloydminster, so my question is to the Premier: does he agree that the government doesn't have a very important role to play in social housing?

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Minister for Social Services.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just about an hour ago I spoke to the candidate from Lloydminster and she clarified that she was referring to provincial involvement and land development, Mr. Speaker. But she does recognize and support our government's commitment to social housing to assist with our low-income individuals and families.

As for the remark that the member opposite referenced that I had made some time ago, I was speaking to the reporter about a particular initiative and we were talking about families on the wait-list. And, Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to say that our families on the wait-list in Regina are not homeless. They are all housed. We will make sure that they continue to be housed until an appropriate house is available to them, Mr. Speaker. So that is positive news, although the members opposite don't want to hear any positive news.

Our record, Mr. Speaker, speaks for itself loud and clear. We have invested \$475 million in social housing in our province. That is over 8,300 units.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** You know, I appreciate . . . Mr. Speaker, I can imagine the candidate in Lloydminster appreciated the advice on how to spin quotes here from that minister. So for the record, here's the exact quote from the Sask Party candidate in Lloydminster, and she said this during the debate last night:

When governments get involved in owning land and being the gatekeepers of social housing, we all know things don't work. I think that belongs to private industries for development, and that's where it should stay.

So, Mr. Speaker, many Saskatchewan families and many people in Lloydminster are struggling to get ahead. They're struggling with the rising costs of living, and they're especially struggling with the cost of housing. On this side, we believe there's a role for government in delivering social housing and affordable housing. But that government cares more about its relationship with the private developers than it does about Saskatchewan families.

To the Premier: what will it take for this government to realize that the public sector has a crucial role to play in delivering social and affordable housing?

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

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** Mr. Speaker, and again our record speaks very loud to our commitment to social housing, including the community of Lloydminster — \$475 million, Mr. Speaker. We will not take advice from the NDP because that is a 480 per cent increase over what the NDP spent in social housing prior to the election.

Vacancy rates are now moving provincially to 3.3 per cent, which is a healthy market vacancy rate, as opposed to when the members opposite were government. When that member was sitting at the cabinet table, the vacancy rate in his city was less than 1 per cent. And what did he choose to do when he had the opportunity to make decisions, Mr. Speaker? Nothing. He didn't even recognize there was an issue in housing. Mr. Speaker, I will take our commitment to social housing over what the NDP did any day of the week.