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

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Affordable Housing Plans

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party announced this week that they are selling off land in Regina in order to potentially start affordable housing construction. The announcement was light on details, Mr. Speaker, about exactly how the government will ensure more affordable housing will actually get built. There was no price tag for the sale and no indication if the money would be used for the construction of affordable housing under Sask Housing or any other public housing body.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party says that they want affordable housing built on this land but there's no information about what tools they will use to ensure these are affordable housing homes. To the minister: how many affordable housing units will be created by this week's sale of provincial land in Regina?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm real delighted that the member opposite is recognizing that land availability is one of the issues we have with housing in the province. It may be one of the biggest challenges. And I know the member opposite doesn't acknowledge that 80,000 more people in the province of Saskatchewan creates a housing challenge. That's why we worked with the city of Regina to ensure that this piece of land, 336 acres within the boundaries of Regina, will be available for land, for sale at this time.

We haven't put a price value on it because it's an RFO [request for offers]. We're getting a request for offers to determine how much money we'll use. We're going to sell this land to allow the city of Regina to move it forward for development, and we have said that the money will go for affordable housing in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, we have a plan. And I think the plan that we've been talking about all morning is the growth plan for this province, and housing's an important part of it.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister said in her news release, and I quote: “By selling this land, we can work with the city of Regina to significantly impact housing availability while also generating funds for safe, quality affordable housing.” But the Sask Party hasn’t previously told the people the accounts are so empty they need to sell provincial assets to generate funds for their projects. And they haven’t told the public what these funds are going to when they say they’re going to build affordable housing.

To the minister: is the Sask Party using this land sale to build social housing and if so, where are these social housing units going to be located?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I do acknowledge the question from the member opposite. And we do have 336 acres of land, and there will be houses built on it. The type of places that we will, the money will be used is on affordable houses across the province, across the city. It doesn’t mean they’ll all be right on that piece of land. But across the city of Regina, that money will be spent on affordable housing, just as we’ve been doing for the last five years, Mr. Speaker.

I’m really pleased that we have an opportunity to build 2,000 units so far. With our growth plan, we have another \$344 million going to be spent on housing, Mr. Speaker. We’re going to have 12,600 new, more units across the province, and there’ll be a whole lot of them in Regina.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party’s plan is to sell off the assets of this province rather than build affordable housing that our province so desperately needs. Their plan is selling the housing the province already has rather than improving and upgrading this housing. Perhaps they haven’t seen the cost increases in constructing new homes, Mr. Speaker. But it’s common sense that it’s cheaper to repair a house than tear it down and build a new one.

The Sask Party has sat for five years — five years — as the stock of affordable housing for Saskatchewan people has dwindled, and now their only action is to sell their assets. To the minister: will the proceeds of the social housing sell-offs go directly to build new affordable homes? Yes or no?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — The proceeds from the sale of this land will go to build affordable housing, Mr. Speaker. We would rather have houses than a piece of land. We have 336 acres of land that’s got nothing on it. We want affordable housing right across this province.

Mr. Speaker, we have built 2,000 affordable units since we became government five

years ago. In the last year, those people across the floor have built 58 units of housing, Mr. Speaker. We have a goal to build 12,400 units in the next five years. Mr. Speaker, a piece of land is worth nothing if there isn't a house on it. We need some homes. We don't need land with nothing on it.