

Addendum

Fix Saskatchewan's Public Transit Crisis

In May 2017, the provincial government [shuttered Saskatchewan's intra-provincial public transit service](#), leaving many residents without access to safe, affordable and reliable public transportationⁱ. For Saskatchewanians, the Saskatchewan Transportation Company (STC) symbolized more than a service that connected our people to critical, life-saving services; it was a safe and reliable way to connect us to each other. In fact, we've seen people who could no longer get to their medical appointments in a neighbouring community without the STC. They are left scrambling to figure out how they will continue with their treatments or access services they rely on in other communities.

In July 2017, three of your Ministers – the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, the Honourable Patty Hajdu, and the Honourable Maryam Monsef – received a letter echoing the sentiments expressed by seven distinguished women's organizations, and alerting them to the devastating impacts that the STC closure would have on women, Indigenous peoples, and those living in rural and remote communities. Reconciliation, women's rights, accessibility, and public safety are all jeopardized by the public transit void in Saskatchewan. We've got to fix this now.

On January 31, 2018, the Honourable Navdeep Bains indicated in Question Period that your government was working on this issue, and was committed to "tak[ing] the appropriate steps that are required and needed to address [it] in a meaningful way". After receiving no update on the steps your government is taking, a letter was sent to Minister Bains in March 2018. People are suffering, and yet there is still no evidence of any attempt from your government to intervene, or provide relief.

As we have seen with the [closure of Greyhound](#) in Western Canadaⁱⁱ, the private sector cannot be relied upon to fulfill Canada's public transportation needs. We must not let history repeat itself. Canada has an obligation to avoid another Highway of Tears.

Again, we urge your government to give this matter the attention it demands. Please devise a federal plan to restore the public transportation routes previously serviced by the STC in Saskatchewan, and the routes previously serviced by Greyhound in Western Canada.

Questions regarding the STC closure were asked in the House of Commons on: [September 22, 2017](#), [December 1, 2017](#), [January 31, 2017](#), and, [May 4, 2018](#).

An adjournment proceeding speech on the STC closure was delivered in the House of Commons on [November 2, 2017](#).

[July 2017 letter to Carolyn Bennett, Patty Hajdu, and Marayam Monsef](#), and [March 2018 letter to Minister Bains](#), enclosed.

Deliver Accessible and Effective Government Services

[A 2017 Auditor General's report](#) confirmed what many people in Saskatoon West have been feeling - Canadians are receiving poor service from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). The report indicated that between March 2016 and March 2017, the agency blocked some 50% of Canadians' phone calls, and provided misleading information to inquiries almost 30% of the timeⁱⁱⁱ. The CRA's service has degraded to a point where it is inaccessible and unreliable, leaving many Canadians scrambling when they have inquiries, or go to complete their tax returns. The Saskatoon West constituency office is inundated with inquiries from frustrated constituents who feel they cannot get a satisfactory level of client service from the CRA.

In March 2017, a letter was sent to the Honourable Diane LeBouthillier detailing the erosion of client services at the CRA. The letter captured the frustrations of those living in Saskatoon West and recommended that your government seriously consider alternative service delivery methods, like in-person counter service, to complement the phone service.

A letter was also sent to the Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos in March 2017, detailing the many administrative obstacles preventing Saskatoon West families from accessing the highly-touted Canada Child Benefit (CCB). There is no doubt that such a benefit provides much-needed relief for Canadian families, and smooth administration and access should be of paramount concern. Restoring counter service would allow families having difficulty accessing their benefits an invaluable opportunity to speak directly with CRA representatives to resolve their issues more efficiently.

We recommend that your government take immediate action to fix the underlying causes of CRA's customer service issues. Additionally, we recommend bringing back in-person counter service so that people in Saskatoon West, and across Canada, have the opportunity to speak directly with CRA representatives.

A question on the Canada Child Benefit was asked in the House of Commons on [March 22, 2017](#).

[March 2017 letter to Diane LeBouthillier](#), and [March 2017 letter to Jean-Yves Duclos](#), enclosed.

Implement Pay Equity Legislation

As a self-proclaimed feminist, you are no doubt aware that pay equity, or, in Canada, pay inequity, affects women in a manner which constitutes a violation of their human rights. It is impermissible to compensate men and women differently for work of the same value, yet your government has failed to act.

Addressing the issue, as recommended by both the [2004 Pay Equity Task Force](#)^{iv} and the [2016 Special Committee on Pay Equity](#)^v reports, requires proactive pay equity legislation. But, your government missed the 18 month deadline set in 2016 to bring forward this legislation, and women across Canada must continue asking the question: how long must we wait? They deserve better and we must act now.

Pay equity not only affirms the human rights of Canadian women, but it also makes good economic sense. A 2014 OECD report indicates that “G20 countries have much to gain from increased female labour force participation in terms of economic growth and increased welfare”, and suggests a need to “ensure that gender gaps in economic empowerment are eliminated” (p. 3)^{vi}. Our economy, and, more importantly, our people, will benefit when we begin moving closer towards true pay equity.

Human rights issues should not be left in folders, or forgotten on parliamentary shelves, collecting dust. They should be cracked open, addressed, and resolved, as soon as possible. A progressive government would recognize that the human rights of Canadian women need to be enforced by law. **We, therefore, implore you to bring forward proactive pay equity legislation, without more delay.**

Questions regarding pay equity have been asked in the House of Commons on: [October 19, 2016](#), [November 14, 2016](#), and [December 8, 2016](#).

Statements on pay equity were presented in the House of Commons on: [June 15, 2016](#) and [June 14, 2017](#).

An adjournment proceeding speech on Pay Equity was delivered in the House of Commons on: [October 27, 2016](#).

[2016 NDP supplementary report](#) to the Special Committee on Pay Equity’s final report, enclosed.

Reverse Funding Cuts to AIDS Organizations

Unlike many places in Canada, Saskatchewan continues to experience alarming rates of HIV/AIDS - 2.5 times higher than the national average. People are becoming ill, and dying, from a disease that is both treatable and preventable in what [some health experts have indicated should be referred to as a public health emergency](#)^{vii}. Saskatchewan MPs raised this issue by writing to the Honourable Jane Philpott in September 2016, and then to the Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor in April 2018.

Prime Minister, during a public health crisis, there should be a focus on supporting organizations and initiatives that are making a positive impact. Yet, disappointingly, your government's actions seem to run contrary to what constitutes a logical response to Saskatchewan's HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Your government's decision to inexplicably [cut funding to organizations](#) that were making a difference in our communities^{viii} does nothing to address an already dire health emergency. In fact, by cutting funding to organizations like AIDS Saskatoon and All Nations Hope, your government has jeopardized the outreach, education and prevention work that is so desperately needed in Saskatchewan.

It is hard to believe that this decision was evidence-based and well-conceived. **We urge that this decision be re-assessed, and that your government reverse the cuts to organizations in Saskatchewan that assume a pivotal role in prevention and education in the fight against HIV/AIDS.**

Questions regarding HIV/AIDS funding in the House of Commons have been asked on: [June 16, 2017](#), [December 1, 2017](#), [April 19, 2018](#), and [April 23, 2018](#).

September [2016 letter to Jane Philpott](#) and April [2018 letter to Ginette Petitpas Taylor](#), enclosed.

Implement a National Pharmacare Plan

In 1997, the Liberal Party of Canada promised Canadians that it would work towards “(...) a timetable and fiscal framework for the implementation of universal public coverage for medically necessary prescription drugs” (p.8)^{ix}. Twenty-one years have passed, and despite the fact that pharmacare is touted as sound health and economic policy, your government has only committed to studying the issue further. Canadians need action.

Canada is the only developed country in the world with a universal healthcare program that doesn't include a universal prescription drug plan. In our country, we cover the cost to diagnose an ailment, but all-too-often not the cost to treat it. The absence of coverage for essential medications runs contrary to the value of universality underpinning our entire healthcare system. Canadians should not have to choose between paying their rent or purchasing their medication.

A national pharmacare plan would make life better for so many people living in Saskatoon West, including seniors, people on fixed incomes, single parents, women, people working low-wage jobs, and those living with disabilities, to name a few. It would also save Canada billions of dollars.

Mr. Prime Minister, a letter was sent to you in July 2018, expressing support for the Saskatoon Community Clinic's recommendations that a public, universal, single-payer national pharmacare plan be implemented in our country, without delay. **Implementation does not require further study, and we must act now to make pharmacare a reality.**

[July 2018 letter to Justin Trudeau](#), enclosed.

Legislate the Right to Housing

Mr. Prime Minister, [during a press conference](#) to announce the National Housing Strategy (NHS), you proclaimed that your government “(...) recognizes that housing rights are human rights (...) [that] [e]veryone deserves a safe and affordable place to call home (...) and [that you] will introduce legislation to ensure that future governments continue to take steps to support access to adequate housing”.^x Unfortunately, your words fall flat when they are compared with the actions taken by your government on this file.

The NHS only aims to reduce chronic homelessness by 50% over the next decade. How can you say that housing rights are human rights when your plan is to leave 50% of Canada’s chronically homeless out in the cold?

In November 2017, you had an opportunity to support MP Rachel Blaney’s Private Member’s Bill, C-325, to enshrine the right to housing in Canadian law. But, [your government voted ‘nay’^{xi}](#).

Then, in February 2018, you had an opportunity to work across party lines to create a national plan to end and prevent homelessness in Canada. But, again, [your government voted ‘nay’^{xii}](#).

In August 2018, [an open letter signed by over 170 organizations and prominent Canadians](#) was submitted to your office urging you to follow through on your commitment to make housing a human right^{xiii}. We wholeheartedly support this letter.

Despite a track record of refusal to recognize that housing rights are human rights, we are hopeful that your government understands that Canadians should not be left out in the cold with no place to call home. **We can, and we should, be more ambitious with our housing goals. We must start by letting Canadians know - in legislation - that it is their human right to be able to access adequate housing.**

Questions on housing and human rights have been asked in the House of Commons on: [November 24, 2017](#), [March 26, 2018](#), [March 27, 2018](#), [June 1, 2018](#), and [June 12, 2018](#).

Statements on housing and human rights have been delivered in the House of Commons on: [November 22, 2016](#), [December 1, 2017](#), [February 2, 2018](#), and [March 20, 2018](#).

Speeches and adjournment proceedings on housing and human rights have been delivered in the House of Commons on: [November 3, 2017](#), [November 24, 2017](#), and [February 15, 2018](#).

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- ⁱ <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2017/march/22/budget-stc-wind-down>
- ⁱⁱ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/greyhound-cancellations-alberta-manitoba-saskatchewan-british-columbia-1.4739459>
- ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201711_02_e_42667.html
- ^{iv} http://ywcacanada.ca/data/research_docs/00000052.pdf
- ^v <http://www.payequity.gov.on.ca/en/DocsEN/esperp01-e.pdf>
- ^{vi} <https://www.oecd.org/g20/topics/employment-and-social-policy/ILO-IMF-OECD-WBG-Achieving-stronger-growth-by-promoting-a-more-gender-balanced-economy-G20.pdf>
- ^{vii} <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/data-points-to-hiv-crisis-in-saskatchewan/article31948500/>
- ^{viii} <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/sask-hiv-funding-1.4448220>
- ^{ix} Liberal Party of Canada, (1997). *Securing Our Future: Preparing Canada for the 21st Century*. (p. 8)
- ^x <https://globalnews.ca/video/3875671/housing-rights-are-human-rights-trudeau-describes-housing-strategy>
- ^{xi} <http://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/votes/42/1/394>
- ^{xii} <http://sheribenson.ndp.ca/liberals-vote-against-a-national-plan-to-end-homelessness>
- ^{xiii} <http://nhs.socialrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Open-Letter-to-Prime-Minister-Trudeau.pdf>