

Poverty, Violence, and Homelessness

Saskatchewan has the dubious distinction of having the highest rate of intimate partner violence, and the second highest rate of reported sexual assaults amongst the provinces. ¹ Living in poverty is more common for women than men in the province, especially for single women raising children: 44 % of children in female-headed lone-parent families live in poverty in Saskatchewan.¹ Specific groups of women in Saskatchewan face elevated rates of poverty and violence: Aboriginal women are 3-4 times more likely to be the victim of violence and 3 times more likely to live in poverty, and are over-represented in the homeless population.² The high rates of violence and poverty are the major drivers of women's homelessness. Unlike the stereotypical picture we often hold of men's homelessness, family homelessness is often hidden. Women make the choice to stay in unsafe relationships or unsafe living situations, couch-surf, or trade sex for shelter. Across the country, 78% of women in shelters are there as a result of violence.⁴

Questions

- A What concrete steps will you take to reduce the rate of intimate partner violence in Saskatchewan?

The rates of intimate partner violence must be addressed through education. Just as we have bully-prevention programs, we can incorporate domestic partner violence education to this program.

- B The Saskatchewan Poverty Reduction Strategy states that in the short-term, the Government of Saskatchewan will "work with community agencies to expand opportunities for housing for those deemed hard-to-house. "What steps will you take to provide safe, appropriate, supportive housing options for women who are deemed hard to house?"

I am suggesting that, within any affordable housing project, a set number of units be designated as "community agency" units.

- C Will you commit to applying a gender-based analysis of provincial assistance programs, and any future redesign of such programs, to ensure women and families receiving assistance are able to cover the cost of living? **Yes**
- D What will you do to support the Inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and to respond to the disproportionate victimization of Aboriginal women and girls?

We need accurate information from individuals in the community. I would begin a process within Saskatchewan that includes:

- a. **speaking to the Saskatchewan families to find a suitable way to honor the missing and murdered indigenous women.**
- b. **working with Aboriginal communities to find out the cause of this victimization,**
- c. **using this information to put concrete strategies in place (school/community programs related to self-esteem, assertiveness training, career counselling, angel-mentors*)**
- d. **creating a network of "angel-mentors" who will support young women in communities across Saskatchewan.**

Women and Employment

The employment rates of women with children are at a historic high: 67% of women with children under the age of six are employed, and 79% of women with children between the ages of 6-15 are working outside the home.³ However, over half of children (57.9 %) living in lone-parent families in Saskatchewan experience poverty, and 80% of these families are headed by women.⁴ Many poor women are working, but they cannot lift themselves and their children out of poverty, because they are stuck in low-wage, and precarious jobs. Women account for 75% of part-time workers and 62% of minimum wage earners in Saskatchewan.⁵ Women also do significantly more unpaid work in the household (housework, childcare, eldercare), which impacts their ability to retain secure employment, and advance in careers.⁶

Questions

- E What measures will you implement to improve the economic status of women in Saskatchewan?

A growing economy provides us with resources that, in turn, offer more opportunities for everyone. I will put strategies in place to keep our economy on a steady uphill climb, thereby increasing our resources and improving our ability to support women. We must find out exactly what barriers exist and work to break them down. Whether it be childcare, full vs part time schedules, or educational opportunities, we must find out why the economic status of women is at a lower level and target resources to overcome those barriers.

- F Do you have plans to develop work-based training programs that increase opportunities for women to participate in the workforce?

Any change needs information about the current situation - what is working and what is not working. I believe in work-place training that originates from an educational setting and involves local businesses. A partnership between education and business can be practical, cost-effective, and motivating for students.

- G How do you plan on recognizing and giving economic value to the unpaid work of women?

Recognition of, and giving value to the unpaid work of women is critical. I suggest that a well-planned media campaign that is produced with the input of women can be a first step. This campaign would convey:

- a. that unpaid work can be monetized by assigning a cost to hire out all the jobs involved,
- b. that women contribute significantly to the well-being of a household,
- c. that men can also complete unpaid work jobs within a household.

Education – Early Years

In 2016, the Government of Saskatchewan released Saskatchewan's Early Years Plan 2016-2020. The document states that, "supporting Saskatchewan's children during their early years is a long-term priority for our government" and that "it is estimated that one dollar invested in a high quality early years program can result in a return of \$4 to \$9 over the lifespan of the child." One of the five-year goals listed in the plan for child-care is to simplify the child-care subsidy process for parents. According to the Ministry of Social Services child care subsidies information sheet, "the maximum subsidies are provided to families with monthly incomes below \$1640 if they have one child under 18 years of age."⁷ In 2014, a lone parent with one child was considered to be under the poverty line when they make \$2080 per month.⁸Therefore, a family would have to be under the poverty line by \$440/month in order to qualify for the maximum subsidy.

Questions

- H How do you plan to fix the child care subsidies to ensure that all families have access to high quality early years programming for their children?
- I plan to address child care subsidies by creating a Cabinet of the Child Committee. This committee will zero in on specific facts, find out where gaps exist, and plan accordingly.**

Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Child Welfare

In June 2015, the Government of Saskatchewan made a statement that it is committed to meeting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) calls to actions through the adoption of practical solutions. The TRC's first five recommendations address child welfare, including a call for all levels of government to reduce the number of kids in care and a requirement for all child welfare agencies to "take residential school legacy into account in decision-making." ⁹

Questions

- H According to Statistics Canada, 85% of children in care in Saskatchewan are First Nations and Metis. How do you plan to reduce the number of First Nations and Metis children in care?

It is vital that we reduce the number of First Nations and Metis children in care. The Cabinet Committee of the Child can be involved with a specific focus on this issue. *[reminder that this committee will be structured to include other ministries that are relevant to the issue].*

Specifically, any calls to action must be carried out according to Jordan's Principle and involve consultation with first nations communities.

- I In 2015, a legislative review was completed titled Child Welfare Legislative Proposals. What is your response to these proposals and how do you intend to move these recommendations forward?

The proposals identified in the Leader Post article, (D.C. Fraser, Regina Leader-Post February 10, 2017) include legislation related to:

- **Persons of Sufficient Interest (PSI),**
- **Disclosure of information,**
- **Age of a "child" (change to under 18 years),**
- **Age at which financial support is provided (increase to 24 years).**

A responsible government will continually review programs so that we offer the most effective, and sustainable supports for all children - particularly children in care. My belief is that any change that improves the welfare of a child is a positive change. However, legislation must be enacted promptly, and support a process whereby follow-up is consistent and thorough. The Cabinet Committee of the Child will be play a significant role and will be in parallel to the Legislative Proposals currently being recommended. These recommendations will only move forward with the experts in the field of Child Welfare. My Cabinet team will be ready to engage, but more importantly listen to the children.