



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Don Toth
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Dwain Lingenfelter

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
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Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
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Furber, Darcy	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
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Higgins, Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
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Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
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Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
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Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
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Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
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Vermette, Doyle	NDP	Cumberland
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce 25 public services employees that are seated in the Speaker's gallery. They are here to take part in the parliamentary program for the public service, and they're employees from the following ministries: Agriculture; Enterprise Saskatchewan; Environment; Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

The program that they're taking part in today actually includes an in-depth history tour of the legislature building. They have briefings by the Legislative Library, the Office of the Clerk, Executive Council, and by the Speaker. And they are now sitting in the Chamber to observe the proceedings, and I'll have the opportunity to meet with them later on.

I want to thank you for the work you do on a daily basis, and far too often the work you do is taken for granted. And we appreciate the fact that you're here today and learning more about the legislative process. So I invite all members to help me welcome these public service employees to their Chamber.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish to join the minister today and welcome the many public servants that are here today on behalf of the official opposition. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind all members of the very valuable work they do each and every day on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan often goes without the proper recognition that you deserve, and the people of Saskatchewan are better off because of the work you do every day. On behalf of them and, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of us, I'd like to welcome them to their Assembly and hope that you have a very fruitful and eventful day today. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Martensville.

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to introduce my friend, the Hon. Jay Hill. Jay was first elected as a Member of Parliament from BC [British Columbia] for the riding of Prince George–Peace River in 1993. He's since won six elections. He has retired from politics in the fall of 2010, is now working in government relations. And me and some of my colleagues are going to be visiting with him later today.

Jay is now living in Calgary with his lovely wife, Leah. And I do want to say that I know it's hard for people in this House to believe, but I was once a very shy, quiet girl. And Jay and I ran question period together in early 2002, and he worked that out

of me pretty quickly. And I'm here in part because of the things that I learned working with Jay. So I do want to publicly thank him for that and ask all members to help me welcoming him here to this Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today a number of community leaders gathered at the Legislative Assembly to express their disapproval of Bill 160, the Bill to amend *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*. And a few of those leaders remain here today in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

And I wish to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly: Peter Gilmer, he is here today on behalf of the anti-poverty league; Tina Vuckovic who's with the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour women's committee; Larry Kowalchuk, who is here on behalf of the SFL's [Saskatchewan Federation of Labour] human rights committee; and Angelica Barth-Burkholder, who is here representing the Queen City Tenants Association. I hope that all members will welcome these citizens to their Assembly this afternoon.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Enterprise, the member from Meadow Lake.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the House, in the west gallery, Mr. Joel Sopp, an insurance advisor with RBC [Royal Bank of Canada] and also very active with the Saskatchewan Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs, who I had the pleasure of speaking to this afternoon. So welcome, Joel.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the member from Martensville in welcoming my friend and former colleague the Hon. Jay Hill to the legislature.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I'd like to introduce a gentleman that's from my community. He's here, and he works for Northern Lights School Division as a consultant. And I just want to acknowledge him and make sure he knows how welcome he is at the Assembly.

It is an honour to be here representing him, Julius Park. He works for Northern Lights School Division. He's here on business, and he wanted to come and see the House. And I just want to welcome here and say keep up the good work you are doing with our children. It is an honour to have you. Welcome, my friend.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too want to join in with my colleague from Cumberland to welcome Julius Park. And a lot of people don't know . . . A bit about Julius, very quickly.

Julius is a phenomenal basketball player, Mr. Speaker. In 1982

and 1983, he was a member of the provincial basketball championship. La Loche Lakers won that, and I think it was the first time in the history of Saskatchewan that a northern team won the provincial basketball tournament. And Julius received the recognition as scoring the most points in a single game, and also I believe in a tournament. And he held that record for nine years. And, Mr. Speaker, he's very, very proud of the fact that the former MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Athabasca, the Hon. Fred Thompson, got up in the Assembly and he made a statement about that great accomplishment, not just of Julius but of the team as well.

And I want to tell Julius that he is a great northerner, a great Dene leader, and that this Assembly's his Assembly as well. And I should finally close on this point, Mr. Speaker, that Julius and I played basketball against each other. And he often accused me of being a little dirty during some of the exchanges under the basket. And, Mr. Speaker, I can assure him that referees are there to make that call. It's not his to make. But I want to point out that Julius is a phenomenal northerner, a great friend, and one that I truly call my brother. Thank you very much.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan residents who are facing surging rent increases that are simply making living in Saskatchewan unaffordable. Mr. Speaker, it also points out that a majority of Canadians now live in provinces with rent control guidelines, including Manitoba, British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and Prince Edward Island. And it also points out the fact that in rent-controlled Winnipeg, they generated over 1,500 new rental units in that city, and when you combine Regina and Saskatoon with no rent controls during that same period of time, there was only 300 new rental unit starts in those cities.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's an issue we need to look at. And the prayer reads:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the government to immediately enact rent control legislation that protects Saskatchewan tenants from unreasonable increases in rent.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed on behalf of citizens in Regina, Moose Jaw, Belle Plaine, Cupar, Kamsack, and Canora. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to present a petition from people supporting maintaining quality health care services.

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly showeth that the Government of

Saskatchewan ought to recognize the need for timely access to comprehensive and quality health care services for all communities within the province, including Wakaw and surrounding areas, and that the disruption of emergency services and in-patient services at Wakaw Hospital will not serve the needs of the residents in this community and surrounding areas; and

That cuts in access to timely and accurate diagnostic and laboratory tests with the community of Wakaw and surrounding area will not serve the needs of the residents.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to maintain quality health care services through the commitment of necessary funding to address critical retention and recruitment issues.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Wakaw and Bellevue. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of Northern Trappers Association Co-operative. The fur industry has much potential for our northern trappers. It is a way to educate and empower our northern youth and to connect them with their culture. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the Sask Party government to recognize that Northern Trappers Association Co-operative maintains the traditional values of hunting and trapping and also brings in millions of dollars to the provincial economy every year from the proceeds of fur harvesting combined with the economic spinoffs to the tourism sector and to the local economy;

And in so doing, cause the Sask Party government to immediately show their support for the Northern Trappers Association Co-operative by providing additional funding to assist in development of value-added and marketing strategies that will enhance the current income levels available to their members.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

It is signed by the good people of Stanley Mission. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition concerning the need for hospice and palliative care here in the province:

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: that all Saskatchewan people deserve quality end-of-life and bereavement care; that hospice and

palliative care is known to enhance the quality of life for those facing advancing illness, death, and bereavement; that a publicly funded and administered hospice and palliative care system including residential hospices would increase end-of-life care options for Saskatchewan people.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan cause the provincial government to enhance and increase publicly funded and administered hospice and palliative care, including in-home hospice services and residential hospices, in order to ensure that all Saskatchewan people have access to high-quality end-of-life care.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition are from the cities of Saskatoon and Regina. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present a petition in support of a potash royalty review, considering that the citizens of the province of Saskatchewan are owners of a 1,000-year strategic resource and that the same citizens deserve to receive the maximum possible return on that resource. Additionally, the CEO [chief executive officer] of one of the major potash companies said that there's a new norm for potash in a speech to his shareholders. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the government to begin a comprehensive, transparent, and public review of Saskatchewan's potash royalty system with a view to maximizing the return from this strategic resource for its owners, the people of Saskatchewan, who wish to use these additional potash revenues for needed investments in health care, child care, education, affordable housing, infrastructure, and other social programs as well as initiatives such as debt repayment.

Mr. Speaker, the petition today is signed by good folks from North Battleford, Prince Albert, Candle Lake, Maple Creek, Christopher Lake, and Kamsack. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I rise today to present petitions signed by citizens of Saskatchewan concerned about the detrimental effect that Bill 160 will have on human rights law in the province if enacted. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan withdraw Bill 160 from consideration by the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan and hold extensive public consultations informed by a public policy paper before any amendments to the Human Rights Code, the law that supersedes all others in our province, are even considered.

Today the petition is signed by residents of Mildred, Saskatoon, Kamsack, Verigin, Regina, North Battleford, Shellbrook, Prince Albert, Candle Lake, Maple Creek, and Christopher Lake, Mr. Speaker. And I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the mismanagement of our finances by the Sask Party. They allude to the fact that the Sask Party has run deficits and increased debt at times of record highs of revenues, that this province reports its finances in a way that's out of line with public sector accounting standards and the rest of Canada, all provinces and territories. And they highlight the fact that debt has increased for the last three consecutive years, well over \$1.3 billion of debt being increased, in this year alone, debt being increased by \$548 million to the public books, Mr. Speaker. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that the honourable Legislative Assembly condemn the Sask Party government for its damaging financial mismanagement since taking office, a reckless fiscal record that is denying Saskatchewan people, organizations, municipalities, institutions, taxpayers, and businesses the responsible and trustworthy fiscal management that they so deserve.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions are signed by concerned residents of Regina, Saskatoon, and Lloydminster. I so submit.

[13:45]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

The Generosity and Commitment of Volunteers

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday nine Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal recipients were presented with their awards. And I'm proud to say that, of those nine, two individuals reside in the constituency of Cypress Hills, which in itself is unprecedented in my tenure as their MLA.

Now both Lexie Culham of Cabri and Albin Zubot of Burstall exemplify the generosity and commitment of volunteers throughout our province. By donating their time and special skills in service to their communities, they contribute to the experiences of each person who has the good fortune to reside in their respective small towns.

In her nomination, Lexie Culham is referred to as a pillar of the town of Cabri's music programs. She shares her love and gift of music by providing lessons, accompaniment, and entertainment. The Royal Canadian Legion, the Cabri Brass Band, the Cabri United Church, the Ecumenical Teen Choir, the Cabri school, and the Cabri health care facility all have programs which have been enriched due to Lexie's volunteer contributions.

Albin Zubot has served as chairman and treasurer for a number of clubs in the town of Burstall, has taken on the role of project manager for the community water treatment centre, has coached minor league baseball, softball, basketball, and volleyball. He's helped with the construction and maintenance of community ball diamonds, engineered a solar water heating system for the swimming pool, and the list goes on. For 25 years, Albin has demonstrated a commitment to making his town a great place to live, earning him the utmost respect from the citizens of his community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Annual Better Newspaper Awards

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, April 16th, the Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association announced the winners of the annual Better Newspaper Awards. The BNA awards, as they are sometimes called, recognizes the excellent in journalism, the layout among numerous weekly newspapers right across this great province. With Saskatchewan's wide open spaces and spread out population, these weekly newspapers have been providing information, entertainment, and are a main source of community news that is referred to by families again and again throughout the week.

The BNA awards are given to recognize such accomplishments as the best news story, best research story, best agriculture story, and of course the best hard news photos. Working within the areas, the weekly newspapers have continued a long tradition of citizen journalism that reaches back to the earliest days of the province. Many papers can trace their roots back to the '30s, '20s, and some even earlier. The Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association, by hosting these awards, makes sure that the proud history of Saskatchewan's weekly newspapers continues and in the future with a commitment to excellence that all Saskatchewan should be proud of.

Therefore I would like to extend, on behalf of myself and the entire NDP [New Democratic Party] opposition, a sincere congratulations to these hard-working and dedicated reporters, photographers, editors, and production staff. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Housing Development in Esterhazy

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our province continues to move forward as is evident by the many positive economic indicators including housing starts. However this isn't just the case in our cities.

On March 25th I had the opportunity to attend a sod-turning event in Esterhazy. Boombata Homes is beginning the first phase of their Deerwood development on 40 acres of land in the northwest side of Esterhazy. This project will consist of 72 condo-style apartments, 11 duplexes, and 13 single family homes. The total value of phase 1 of the project is \$55 million. Mr. Speaker, this is yet another sign of our provincial economy moving forward.

This investment by Boombata Homes will create jobs in Esterhazy and area in the short term and meet the housing demands in a growing population in the long term. Mr. Speaker, this housing investment is another sign our province continues to move forward. Investments such as this are happening across Saskatchewan thanks to our strong economy and growing population. Mr. Speaker, this housing initiative is good news for the people of Esterhazy but also good news for the province of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

Le Concours d'art oratoire

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure last week of attending the divisional championships in Saskatoon for le Concours d'art oratoire, an annual public speaking event for students who are studying French as a second language.

This is the third year I've had the opportunity to attend these divisional championships, and I'm always so impressed with the French these young students speak, the topics they choose to write about, and their ability to stand before a crowd with the utmost confidence and deliver amazing speeches in their second language.

Mr. Speaker, the goal of Concours d'art oratoire organized by Canadian Parents for French is to further motivate the interest of English-speaking students in learning French. Schools around the province host their own public speaking competitions with winners progressing to competitions held by local school divisions. Students in grade 6 to 12 who place first or second at their divisional event are given the opportunity to participate at the provincial level. At the Saskatoon event held at Cardinal Leger last week, there were 48 students from grade 5 to 8 representing schools across the city.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon Riversdale is home to l'École française de Saskatoon, or as we Anglos call it, the Saskatoon French School. The school fielded eight participants in their regionals. Of special note from the Saskatoon French School, Yiwen Li finished third in the grade 7 group. Also in grade 7, Hennessey Chartier-Ford finished second and is excited to be heading to provincials at Saskatoon's Holy Cross High School on May 7th.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in offering our congratulations to all the students who participated in the regionals and wishing good luck to those who are progressing to the provincials next month. Félicitations et bonne chance, et merci. [Translation: Congratulations, good luck, and thank you.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Growth in Saskatchewan

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The latest economic indicators point to this province as a great place to live and work and raise a family. Our population is now at an all-time high, over 1.052 million people. It has grown over

15,000 people in the . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. I would ask that members have the respect, show the respect and allow the member to make their ministerial statement without interference. I'll invite the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford to start over and do his statement without interference. I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our population is now at an all-time high, over 1.052 million people. It has grown by over 15,000 people in the past year making Saskatchewan the second-fastest growing province in Canada. The province's population has now increased for 19 consecutive quarters, and in the past four years, Saskatchewan has grown by almost 60,000 people, the fastest and most sustained period of population growth in decades.

New employment numbers show that 516,800 people were employed in March 2011, the second-highest level of employment on record for the month of March. There were employment increases in construction, transportation, warehousing and utilities, finance, insurance and real estate, and public administration.

Recently RBC released a report that estimates Saskatchewan's economy grew by 4.5 per cent in 2010, the second highest rate of economic growth in the country in 2010. The same report is also forecasting growth rates of 4.9 per cent and 4.3 per cent for 2011, 2012 respectively, the highest rates of economic growth among all the provinces for both years.

Our province employment is expected to grow by more than 2 per cent each year or by about 10,000 jobs in 2011 and 12,000 jobs in 2012. Mr. Speaker, this data reinforces what is now being referred to as the Saskatchewan advantage. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Human Rights

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, on the front steps of the Assembly today, representatives of groups concerned with human rights spoke out against this government's plan to stifle the further development of human rights law in the province by abolishing human rights tribunals.

So far, Mr. Speaker, the government hasn't been listening. We know who does have the government's ear, Mr. Speaker, and it's one of the foremost opponents of human rights commissions in Canada, Ezra Levant.

A week after a judge ordered him to pay \$25,000 for his reckless indifference to the truth for blog posts about a Canadian Human Rights Commission lawyer, Mr. Levant came to the Assembly last fall, Mr. Speaker, to be on hand as Bill 160 was introduced and was warmly welcomed by the member for Meadow Lake as he said, "a well-known political commentator and soon-to-be Sun TV personality."

Well the sun rose on Mr. Levant's new television career this week, Mr. Speaker, but his opposition to the work of human rights commissions is as fierce as the day is long. From his days as an opponent of the Alberta Human Rights Commission, Mr. Levant's even gone on to write a whole book, Mr. Speaker, called *Shakedown*, continuing his campaign against the work of human rights commissions which he says are "selling an obsolete product as part of a grievance industry. The battle for equality just isn't as urgent any more," writes Mr. Levant, calling human rights commissions "the biggest threat to our core liberties."

Mr. Speaker, it's hard to accept government assurances on Bill 160 when its abolition of human rights tribunals is being cheered on by a Sun TV personality who doesn't want another Human Rights Commission case to see the light of day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Volunteer Medal Awards

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, while the Volunteer Awards were on, the members from Saskatoon Eastview and the Saskatoon Nutana were mumbling and complaining away, Mr. Speaker. And fact is they even sent the Premier a note complaining about the recipients, Mr. Speaker, and their constituencies.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan government in 1995, the former administration, set up the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medals Awards, and there are public calls for nominations. Individuals only may be nominated, Mr. Speaker, and any individual and group from across the province may nominate someone for selection. And that selection is made, Mr. Speaker, by the Saskatchewan Honours Advisory Council.

Well yesterday the member from Saskatoon Eastview put in a written question asking, who are those members on that advisory committee? So I'd like to read out the list: Mitchell Holash from Prince Albert, former Chair of the Police Commission and member of the Arts Board; Elisabeth Hugel, Mr. Speaker, from Regina, who's the registrar of the protocols and honours committee; Elva Kyle, Mr. Speaker, from Regina, spouse of former Justice Kyle; Lester Lafond, First Nations businessman and Saskatchewan Order of Merit recipient; Justice Robert Laing, Mr. Speaker; Fredrick Mantey, the cabinet secretary; Linda McIntyre who is the secretary for the honours committee, Mr. Speaker; Carol Peterson who is a recipient; Oren Robison, Order of Canada recipient; Dr. Vianne Timmons from the U of R [University of Regina]; and Art Wakabayashi, former chancellor, U of R.

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Contract Negotiations with Health Care Workers

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, today we're joined by a group of health science professionals in the Speaker's gallery.

And, Mr. Speaker, they're here today for two main reasons. One, because in their area of profession, they have a number of shortages right across the province. And also because they're dealing with a government that simply isn't moving to get a proper contract in place. We also know, we also know that the . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I would ask the members in the gallery . . . Order. Order. Order. I would ask the members in the gallery, while you're invited to be here, you're asked not to participate in the debate. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, the members of the Health Sciences Association, a professional group, are here today because there's a shortage in many areas that they represent, and also because of a lack of a contract for a long period of time.

And what we're saying, Mr. Speaker, is that the example of respiratory therapists, respiratory therapists in this province, we have in this province . . . Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, obviously a sensitive point to the members opposite. But, Mr. Speaker, in the . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I would think the members would like to hear the question coming from their colleague. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the respiratory therapists, for example, who are represented here today, in their area of profession they are represented by the lowest number per capita of any province in Canada. And these are the men and women who help the critically ill patients, critically ill patients with their breathing.

In light of the fact that we have this shortage and we have a group of professional health caregivers who are without a contract for a long period of time, Mr. Speaker, when will this government come to realize that you're going to have to pay a reasonable salary in order to attract and retain employees in this area going into the future?

[14:00]

The Speaker: — I've asked the members in the gallery not to participate. I would appreciate if the members would respect the rules of the Legislative Chamber. I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we know that this province is blessed with many health care professionals that work 24-7, 365 days a year, Mr. Speaker, that provide excellent service throughout the whole province, Mr. Speaker. Whether it's from the south to the north, east and west, Mr. Speaker, we're blessed with very strong and . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. It would probably be

appropriate to allow the minister to share his response so that the members in the gallery can hear. I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — As I said, we are blessed with very capable and competent health care workers, health care professionals throughout the province. Mr. Speaker, right now the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations is in contract negotiations with one of the last health care providers that hasn't settled in the province, Mr. Speaker. I would ask both of those parties to stay talking and find a common agreement, Mr. Speaker, a common agreement that has been found in most every other health care provider organization in the province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the last three and a half years we've come to an agreement with Saskatchewan Union of Nurses. We've come to an agreement with CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees]. We've come to an agreement with SEIU-West [Service Employees International Union]. Mr. Speaker, we've come to an agreement with SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union], most recently with PAIRS [Professional Association of Internes and Residents of Saskatchewan], Mr. Speaker, and with the SMA [Saskatchewan Medical Association], all at competitive wages. I don't believe that it'll be any different than with the Health Sciences, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the area of shortages in the specialized care is putting Saskatchewan families and members of families at risk in this province. And we need only look back a few short months ago when four babies became critically ill at the Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon. Why? Because the wrong prescriptions were given to these children. And in fact the VP [vice-president] of clinical operations agreed that that was because of a lack of staff and outdated facilities.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is this: in light of the fact that in the past two years we have a cut of 18 pharmacists at hospitals in this province and in light of the fact that we have enough money — there's a lot of money for CEOs, in fact up to 60 per cent — why is it that we can't hire more pharmacists in hospital and give a proper contract to these workers who are here today?

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I'm just going to remind the members in the gallery . . . Order. If our guests continue to not heed to the rules of the Legislative Assembly, we're going to have to ask our guests to leave. Order. Order. Order. I've already asked, I've already reminded the members. The Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, I can't start negotiations on the floor of the Assembly. But what I would say, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the whole complement of health care providers that we have in the province, Mr. Speaker, according to CIHI [Canadian Institute of Health Information] we have the highest number of health care workers combined per capita for Western Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, our goal as government has been to make sure that

we have the proper complement. So we set targets for many of the health care providers, and we've met those targets, Mr. Speaker. It is a far cry from where we were just three short years ago, Mr. Speaker, where the NDP simply turned their back on health care workers year in and year out, Mr. Speaker.

Many of the unions said that they were absolutely ignored by the NDP. That isn't the case with this government, Mr. Speaker. We've worked on contracts with many of the health care providers, tens of thousands of people have settled contracts, as high as 95 per cent acceptance rate, Mr. Speaker. We believe that will be the case. We sure hope that's the case with the Health Sciences union as we move forward.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'll tell the minister this, that the members of the professional service who are here today feel very much ignored by this government. And I'll tell you that they are going to deal with this government in a harsh way at the first opportunity.

My question to the minister is this, Mr. Speaker: when it comes to competitive salaries, competitive salaries in this province we know that, even within the context of Western Canada, that the wages paid to our professional health service union people is not accurately reflected in the wages that are being offered. And in fact not only in Saskatchewan does there . . . any competitive area of responsibility occurring.

In Swift Current last week, for example, speech pathologists were offered in the Department of Education, \$75,000 plus a \$20,000 signing bonus. That's the same as health services gets for a master's program at the highest level they can get — \$75,000. Not even in this province are the employees in the health service union and health service professionals being paid properly. They're not competitive in Western Canada. And I ask the minister when we will bring competitiveness to bear.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I've said in my previous answer, when you look at the tens of thousands of people that we have settled with over the last three and a half years, whether it's been CUPE, whether it's been SGEU, the Saskatchewan Medical Association, Mr. Speaker, all those contracts have been competitive with Western Canada. They are based on Western Canada averages, Mr. Speaker. I would think that pretty much all of them are at the 90th percentile. Some that are hard to recruit, some that are hard to recruit, Mr. Speaker, are even above the 90th percentile, Mr. Speaker. Out-of-scope has been at the 65th percentile.

Mr. Speaker, we have settled with tens of thousands of health care workers, Mr. Speaker, because they're valuable in this province and, Mr. Speaker, I believe SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations] and the Health Sciences will find a common agreement that will see those wages competitive with Western Canada.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, on March 16th in the House the minister claimed, and I quote, "We haven't met every wage in Alberta . . . but I can tell you it's fair and competitive . . . if we're not number one, we may be number two but not far behind number one."

Mr. Speaker, that's just not accurate, and the minister knows that. In fact, of the 26 health science professions, 16 of these groups will not be receiving equitable wages even if they accept the proposed increase that's being offered to them. Sixteen of the 26 will not be at a level that their own website shows as being the Western standard. And if we look at EMS [emergency medical services] workers in Saskatchewan, they will be dead last in Western Canada if they accept the offer on the table.

My question to the minister is this: at a time when you're offering up 30, 40, 60 per cent to CEOs, based on how much they cut in health care, why isn't the same applied to those men and women — mainly women — who give excellent service to the people of this province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I said, the Health Sciences union that is still outstanding with a contract is negotiating with SAHO, Mr. Speaker, and they look at all the various professions, Mr. Speaker, and look at market adjustment. They look at supply and demand, Mr. Speaker, what is hard to recruit, which ones are hard to recruit, which ones aren't. Mr. Speaker, all of those factors are put in place when negotiations take place. It wouldn't be up to me to make those wage offers, obviously, on the floor of the Assembly. I haven't in any of the other contracts, Mr. Speaker. SAHO has come to an agreement with tens of thousands of workers, Mr. Speaker, that have ratified at very high percentage rates, Mr. Speaker. I will say that. I believe it was CUPE at 95 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, once the union decides that it would take it to the membership, for the most part as far as we have seen, it has been very well accepted.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Security of Health Information

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan take their health privacy very, very seriously, Mr. Speaker, and they take it very seriously when there's a breach of health information in this province, Mr. Speaker. Last night we had the Information and Privacy Commissioner before committee, Mr. Speaker, and he clearly indicated that there is one impediment to improving the practice of providing security for these health documents in our province, Mr. Speaker, and that's the Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, for the last several years, last three years in particular, the Information and Privacy Commissioner has asked for additional investigators in order to investigate claims of breaches of privacy that are upon the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and each and every time those requests for additional funds to hire additional investigators have been turned down, Mr. Speaker. That will

cost only \$250,000. Would the government commit today for that \$250,000 to hire the three investigators?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the citizens of this province share the member's opposite concern, as do I, when there is breaches of privacy. I can imagine nothing more sensitive to an individual than their personal health records.

Earlier this year, we approved an additional two temporary investigators to work within the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, in the last few days we have indicated that, through the ministries of Health and Justice, we will provide additional resources, either on a contract basis or directly through the ministries, to ensure that there are additional investigators and prosecutors to ensure that, where appropriate, prosecutions can take place.

The citizens of this province have every right to expect that their records will be kept confidential, and it is the goal of this government to ensure that. During the previous government's administration, there was records that went astray. It shouldn't have happened. No prosecutions took place. Under our tenure we are going to ensure that every investigation is completed fully, completely, and appropriately, and prosecutions take place where they should.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If people want to review *Hansard* last night, they'll find out that those breaches occurred only after the election of the new government, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about the seriousness of the situation we face. On March 23rd, more than 100,000 pieces of individual health information were found in a dumpster, Mr. Speaker — more than 100,000 pieces of personal health information, perhaps the greatest breach in the history of this province for sure, maybe in this entire country, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's a serious issue. Serious steps need to be taken to stop these types of breaches from occurring. Since that date four additional breaches have occurred. Mr. Speaker, we need to prosecute those responsible. Will the government commit today, without any hesitation, that they will prosecute those responsible for these files being in a dumpster, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we have a prosecutorial standard. If these files meet that standard — and we will do everything we can to look carefully and make sure whether they do — but if they do, if they meet the appropriate standard, we will ensure that those prosecutions take place. So the simple answer is, subject to the usual prosecutorial guidelines, yes.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, the Information and Privacy

Commissioner made it clear last night that there are cases he's sent forward that should have, in the minds of himself and others, been prosecuted, Mr. Speaker. Those prosecutions never occurred, Mr. Speaker. So where is the problem in our system that continues to allow violations of our health information privacy Act, Mr. Speaker? It's in the office of the Minister of Justice, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, we'll ask the Minister of Justice one more time: is he going to take the protection of the privacy of Saskatchewan citizens seriously, and is he going to forward to prosecution this situation?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, prior to our government, our party forming government, we've always taken privacy, we've supported the work of the Privacy Commissioner. Mr. Speaker, that group of people did not increase the resources of the Privacy Commissioner. We have. We have provided additional resources, and, Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, we have provided the resources of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health.

We have written letters to the trustees that hold this information. We and they take it seriously. They should all take it very seriously because they are in very serious danger of being prosecuted for this, Mr. Speaker. We are trying to get a message to everybody that has personal health care information, that it does not belong in a dumpster, Mr. Speaker. There are appropriate and proper places for those things to be kept, and we expect those trustees to do it. If they fail, if they fall below that standard, prosecutions will ensue, Mr. Speaker.

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Issues in Health Care

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday Charlene Sullivan was here asking the minister to honour a promise he made in his office in front of witnesses to cover her dental implants. In the rotunda, the minister said he can't make policy in his office. He also said, "We can only cover people who apply." At the same time, Mr. Speaker, his senior staff was phoning a patient telling him to send his application and he would get coverage for his implants.

Mr. Speaker, how can the minister stand in the rotunda talking about Charlene Sullivan's case, saying he can't make policy in his office, when at the same time his senior department staff is phoning a patient telling him he will be covered; he just has to apply. Why the double standard?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I said in the House yesterday and I said out in the rotunda, after we looked at the policy, we realized the policy wasn't consistent with other provinces. We've changed that policy, Mr. Speaker. What I found out is that some of the people that had lobbied for this

very policy change had not had either their dental surgeon or themselves apply to test the new policy to see what would happen with the new policy.

Mr. Speaker, in fact one of the persons that had lobbied had told us after that the dentist himself, the dental surgeon said, you don't need to apply; it won't be approved. Mr. Speaker, we're asking people that have lobbied to apply, Mr. Speaker. We'll put it through the criteria. People within the ministry will look and see whether it should be covered.

We cover congenital defects, Mr. Speaker, as well as tumour removal. That's when implants are put in, Mr. Speaker. But we have professionals within the ministry that will adjudicate those applications based on the policy that we changed. It certainly wasn't ever changed under the NDP.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, Doug Bonderud was diagnosed with cancer and treated unsuccessfully with medication. He looked for other surgery options in Canada but because of long wait-lists went to the Mayo Clinic without a referral for surgery. In 2008 the minister ordered that Mr. Bonderud's out-of-province expenses be covered.

Ed Tchorzewski was diagnosed with cancer and couldn't get surgery in Saskatchewan. He looked around Canada for other surgery options but because of long wait times, went to the Mayo Clinic without a referral for surgery. The minister is refusing to pay for Mr. Tchorzewski's out-of-country medical expenses. The difference between these cases is that Crystal Bonderud was in a Sask Party 2007 election ad.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: how can he stand in his place and say he follows policy when he continues to change it on the fly for political gain without not even a semblance of fairness?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, when we came to government, we reviewed the out-of-country coverage for people that seek medical procedures outside of country. We reviewed that. It was the same policy that was in place under the NDP. We've looked at that and we've moved on it to have a medical review services review committee that will look at that as an appeal process.

But, Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite, what the critic opposite failed to say in her question, Mr. Speaker, is that in the Crystal Bonderud case, which went to the Ombudsman, the Ombudsman ruled that the government should cover the cost, Mr. Speaker. In the Tchorzewski case, Mr. Speaker, it went to the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman said that it shouldn't be covered, Mr. Speaker. We've been very consistent . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I'd ask the members to allow the minister to respond to the question presented by their colleague. I recognize the minister who may want to complete his comments.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, we've been very consistent with the rulings. When the Ombudsman steps in, and he doesn't step in very often, we have great respect for his office. That's why we follow through on recommendations that he's put forward. And also, when he recommends, for example, that perhaps the ministry in a certain case should cover expenses, we've followed through on that, Mr. Speaker.

In this case that they're citing, the Ombudsman was notified and there is a letter saying that he doesn't feel that this should be covered, Mr. Speaker. We followed along with that. The ministry also agrees that this was a case where out-of-country approval — prior approval — was not sought. And, Mr. Speaker, the procedures that were under the NDP were followed as they were under our government.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, the minister is consistently inconsistent. Last year, the minister threw together some policy and promises because he was facing citizens who had real dental problems and special circumstances. He promised them he would fix it, but in fact they were empty promises.

He has proven that he picks and chooses who he will cover for out-of-country cancer surgery, based on political gain, and that he will reward health region CEOs with up to 60 per cent wage increases for cutting services while he turns his back on front-line health care workers asking for a fair and respectful contract.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the minister's broken promises, disregard for front-line health care professionals and fly-by-night policies, why would anyone believe anything he says about Kamsack Hospital, Wakaw Hospital, long-term care beds, or doctor recruitment?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, that was quite a wide-ranging question, Mr. Speaker, but what I will say is that the government that has been in place for three and a half years, Mr. Speaker, have made commitments. They've set targets, Mr. Speaker, something that the former government would never do.

When we said, Mr. Speaker, we'd attract 800 more nurses to this province, this government has done it, Mr. Speaker. When we said we'd increase the number of medical seats to 100 seats, this government has done it, Mr. Speaker. When we said we'd increase the number of residency positions to 120, Mr. Speaker, this government has done it, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we said we'd cover Avastin because it was a standard of care for cancer patients in this province, which that government turned its back on, this government covered it. Mr. Speaker, I'll take no lessons from the former government. They're going to be in those benches for a very, very long time because, Mr. Speaker, they were scared to set targets because, as the member from North Battleford said, we just wouldn't meet them.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, what this minister has done to the people of Saskatchewan has confused them. They don't know what are the policies of this government. It depends on what the minister is feeling at the moment, who comes here, who talks to him, who appears in an ad. It appears that the minister has no policy. No one can actually say they understand what the criteria are. Dental surgeons don't understand. They think it's simply just to oil the squeaking wheel, Mr. Speaker.

And then when the squeaking wheel goes away, the minister just forgets what he's promised and does nothing, and stands in this House and rants and rants till he's red in the face, and it does not impress anybody. People from Kamsack that were here yesterday, Mr. Speaker, they saw that, those antics. They do not believe this minister. They do not believe he'll fix anything in Kamsack or Wakaw. Why would anyone else in this province believe anything he says any more?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, when citizens came to this province, Mr. . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, when citizens came to this legislature that were having trouble with certain policies, not only did we say we'd look at it, Mr. Speaker; this government changed those policies. Mr. Speaker, when it comes to dental implants, we've improved the policy that was . . . under 16 years of government, that never looked at it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, under the old NDP, Mr. Speaker, hospitals were closed throughout this province. I forget how many. Does anybody remember? Fifty-two hospitals, including the Plains hospital, was closed under that government. And I know the critic always says, nobody cares about that any more. Come with me out with to rural Saskatchewan; we'll show you who cares, Mr. Speaker. In fact every one of these MLAs could take that member out and show you who cares about who closed those hospitals. And it was under the NDP, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you rural Saskatchewan and urban Saskatchewan will never go back to that government again.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Chair of the House Services Committee.

Standing Committee on House Services

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on House Services to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present its 12th report. And I would move:

That the 12th report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — The Deputy Chair of the House Services Committee has moved:

That the 12th report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on the Economy.

Standing Committee on the Economy

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 166, *The Renewable Diesel Act* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Government Deputy House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill and that the Bill be now read the third time.

The Speaker: — The Deputy Government House Leader has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 166, *The Renewable Diesel Act* without amendment and that the Bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 166 — *The Renewable Diesel Act*

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for Enterprise that Bill No. 166, *The Renewable Diesel Act* be now read the third time and passed under its title.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Third reading of this Bill.

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING
AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Private Bills to report private Bill No. 906, *The Bethany College Amendment Act, 2011* without amendment and to present its 11th report. I move:

That the 11th report on the Standing Committee on Private Bills be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It's been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills:

That the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Private Bills be now concurred in.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the member from Martensville.

Ms. Heppner: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 906, *The Bethany College Amendment Act, 2011*, and that the Bill be now read a third time.

The Speaker: — The member from Martensville has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 906, *The Bethany College Amendment Act, 2011* and that the Bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I now ask the member to move third reading of the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 906 — *The Bethany College Amendment Act, 2011*

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Martensville that Bill No. 906, *The Bethany College Amendment Act, 2011* be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Third reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Yates: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Dewdney may state his point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today during question period I saw something in this Assembly that I hoped I would never see, Mr. Speaker, an attempt by the Government House Leader to both intimidate members of the public and members of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, in an action that he carried out in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. He acted in a manner that would, that would be considered to be inappropriate, Mr. Speaker, threatening, Mr. Speaker, and people believe that this type of behaviour is unacceptable within our society.

We need to lead by example in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader has no right to in any way involve members of the general public in the debate on this floor. He has no right to make a gesture that would intimidate any member of the public or any member of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that's totally, totally inappropriate.

Members on this side of the Assembly take offence to that behaviour, as do members of the public, Mr. Speaker. That type of behaviour is not acceptable behaviour within this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you rule on this gesture, which I'm sure you saw as all members of the Assembly saw.

Mr. Speaker, we saw the member make a gesture that could be considered like cutting somebody's throat, Mr. Speaker. It's inappropriate to go across your chest and throat and put your finger out, Mr. Speaker. It is not an appropriate gesture. It's not an appropriate gesture in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Mr. Speaker, we're not playing baseball in this Assembly either, and for members to make funny of that type of gesture in this Assembly just tells you the nature of the members, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask that you rule on the appropriateness of that behaviour within this Assembly.

[14:30]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington, the Government House Leader.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did not make the gesture that the Opposition House Leader contends that I did. But if I made any gesture that offended anyone, I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I thank the member for apologizing. I will

also remind members of the importance of respecting the rules of the Assembly and also indicate that it's not always possible for the Speaker to be aware of what's going on. Most times when a question is being placed, I'm listening to and observing the person who's on the floor, and same with the response. So I thank the member from Cannington for apologizing to the Assembly. Order. Order. Order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 172 — *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2011/Loi de 2011 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les victimes d'actes criminels*

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2011*.

Mr. Speaker, one of this government's priorities is to ensure the justice system provides adequate focus on and support for victims of crime. Leadership in providing that support comes through our police-based victim services programs and from our victim services providers throughout Saskatchewan.

The Ministry of Justice and Attorney General provides funding for 18 police-based victim services programs. The staff and workers in these programs work closely with the police and assist victims in the immediate aftermath of a crime or a tragedy and throughout the criminal justice process. The services offered include crisis intervention, information, support, and referrals to other specialized programs and services. Services are provided by staff and a team of volunteer victim support workers.

Mr. Speaker, these victims services providers must be able to determine who has been the victim of a crime so that they can provide them with the support that they need. That is why this Bill amends *The Victims of Crime Act* to establish a requirement that police must disclose to designated local victims service providers certain limited identification information about a victim. This applies to members of the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] acting under a provincial policing contract as well as municipal police officers.

These amendments seek to address a disclosure issue that has arisen with the RCMP across Canada. Despite the RCMP's support of timely delivery of local victim services, they need greater local clarification that this information can legally be disclosed for this specific purpose. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, this Bill will expressly authorize the limited release of victim information to designated victims services providers as named by minister's order.

To be designated under this section, the person must be engaged in the delivery of police-based victims services. The privacy rights of the victim will be carefully safeguarded. The

information provided by police will be restricted to contact information and the limited incident information necessary to allow victims services to contact the victim to determine whether they would consent to any victims services.

Mr. Speaker, the Act specifically limits the purposes for which the information may be used to firstly contacting the victim and secondly providing or facilitating victims services. If an individual declines these services, no further contact will be made. The designated victims services provider will be required to destroy the information that was required under this Act.

This legislation is being brought forward at the recommendation of our victims services branch following consultation with the police-based victims services units, the Saskatchewan Association of Police Affiliated Victim Services Inc., Saskatchewan-based RCMP community policing representatives, and the policing services division of the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

On the national level, Saskatchewan is co-chairing with officials from Public Safety Canada the working group on RCMP referrals to victims services as struck by the federal-provincial-territorial deputy ministers' response for Justice to work with the RCMP to identify solutions to resolve this issue. This proposal follows the approach adopted in Newfoundland and Labrador, and it is being considered as a model in all Canadian provincial and territorial jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, this government is strongly of the view that the justice system must protect victims while it seeks to punish criminals. I know our provincial policing services share this view, and I am hopeful that all members of the Assembly will support this Bill to ensure that victims can receive the services that they need. Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2011*.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved second reading of Bill No. 172, *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2011*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and make comments on the Bill that's before the House, *The Victims of Crime Act, 1995*. Mr. Speaker, I think many people take a particular interest when any changes are being made to this Act because we all recognize that the services provided to victims through victim services, and the absolutely wonderful, dedicated people that work in this area throughout the province have had a huge, positive impact on the lives of many. In many cases, Mr. Speaker, I wonder how on earth they perform their duty with such dedication because it has to be very heart-wrenching at times, very difficult at other times.

So, Mr. Speaker, when any changes come before the Assembly, when it looks at this Act and making changes to this Act, I'm sure there will be a great deal of scrutiny that's put forward. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the minister, gave a bit of an overview of what the changes are and the new section 2.2. I guess in the short title, we also have the addition of "Victims' Information", which really, from the minister's comments, lays out the gist of all of the changes that are being

proposed and put forward. And it clarifies victims' information, who the designated persons are that it can be released to — police officer. It defines victim in this case.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have gone through most of this legislation, but I guess the difficulty for me, Mr. Speaker, I always need to look at it in context of the total Act. I was actually in the process of doing that this morning. There is a couple of questions I have in the last definition, when we are under part III, compensation for victims, interpretations of part, and it's 13(1), Mr. Speaker. There was some changes that are made in the definition of victim in that section in part III. So, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to do a bit more research there and see how it fits in and the references that are made.

Mr. Speaker, I know, as the minister said, you always need to be making adjustments and various changes to be updated and current, and we also know that there is a real concern amongst the public as for privacy. And victims' information would fall, I think, into that category as to how it's being used, who it's being released to, and how far that information will travel.

I know the minister touched on the fact that if not used or if there is a refusal of service from what is offered from victims services that the information needs to be destroyed. Mr. Speaker, it is an issue that's very topical in the province, not only in the province of Saskatchewan but beyond. And we have to be ever vigilant when we are dealing with people's personal information.

And so, Mr. Speaker, at this point in time, there's a bit more research that has to be done. We have to look at how the proposed changes fit within the Act as a whole, get a better understanding of the implication of the changes being proposed. So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would adjourn debate on *The Victims of Crime Act* changes proposed in Bill No. 172.

The Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 172, *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 167

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Reiter that **Bill No. 167** — *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Amendment Act, 2011* be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a relatively short piece of legislation, Bill No. 167, on *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act*. And I guess as short

and, you know, questionably sweet or sour as it is, Mr. Speaker, there have been some fairly wise things said about it by different of my colleagues on this side of the House in the preceding debate on this legislation.

Now this legislation is brought forward under the guise of helping out shortline rail industry and the way that that gives producers additional control over transportation and grain handling issues which is certainly a laudable goal, Mr. Speaker. In the minister's speech, he talked about the kind of advances that have been made for shortline rail over the past decade, and again those are certainly laudable things.

But in the remarks that the minister made in his speech on the Bill, he talked about the need to establish "... legislative authority to undertake the short-line sustainability grant program, develop other initiatives in the future, and better position the corporation to respond to the needs of rural Saskatchewan." Again all laudable goals. And this can be found within April 6th, 2011, page 7122 of *Hansard*.

But the thing that's interesting about this, Mr. Speaker, is that certainly that program existed the year previously, and there's an attendant increase in the amount of funds that are available for this program, moving from 500,000 to 700,000. But the idea that they need to establish legislative authority to administer that program is not the complete picture because of course the legislative authority existed the year previous to administer the shortline sustainability grant program the year before.

What's different in this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, is that it moves it into the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation itself, so out of executive government and into the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation. So what does that do to the expenditure? And what does that do with the FTEs [full-time equivalent] that are attached, the full-time equivalents that are attached, the employees that are attached to the administration of this program?

Well again, Mr. Speaker, it would seem to look, from where I sit in this legislature, that this is more a matter of imaginative or so-called innovative financing on the part of this government over there, where you move things out of executive government and into a Crown corporation. And for all the critique that we heard from members opposite about Crown corporations over the years, turns out they're very big fans of Crown corporations because they've cottoned on to the idea that this can help them manage the appearance of what debt the public is on the hook for and what number of employees are working for the province of Saskatchewan. So it's hard not to think that this is more about managing the appearance of public debt, the appearance of public employee numbers than it is about establishing legislative authority because of course, Mr. Speaker, this program was administered the year previous, and now it's being shunted into the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation.

And again as has been referenced a number of times in this debate, Mr. Speaker, the member from Wakamow, Moose Jaw Wakamow, the Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition, referenced what had happened in 1992 in this province when the Financial Management Review Commission made its report, more commonly known as the Gass Commission for Donald Gass who headed up the efforts of the commission. And

of course, Mr. Gass had been commissioned to get a clear picture of what had happened over the 1980s with the people's books.

[14:45]

And one of the things that he drew attention to was the way that the government of that day — the then Grant Devine Progressive Conservative administration — the way that they had juggled the books and the way that they had shifted expenditures from executive government and the General Revenue Fund off into the Crown corporations. And in trying to get the different Crown corporations back on track and to get an accurate and manageable and an acceptable situation according to the public accounting rules of the day, there were a number of corporations that had a great amount of money written off, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And by written off, I don't mean that it magically disappeared. It was that these financial activities that have been undertaken by different corporations, Crown corporations of the government, were then shifted onto the debt load under the General Revenue Fund so that, again, you could get a proper picture of what the debit picture of the province was.

But in the '92-93 budget, there was \$713 million where the then Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation had debt written off and applied to the General Revenue Fund supported debt. There was \$182 million from the Saskatchewan Water Corporation again transferred from that corporation onto the General Revenue Fund to bring it in line with acceptable accounting practices. And there were \$36 million that were taken from the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation's books and put onto the General Revenue Fund.

Now again, Mr. Speaker, 1991 was the first election that I was able to cast a ballot in the election. And the problem with what happened in the 1980s was that we had a lot of activity that went on that when it came time to pay the cheque, there was a grinding debt that had been accrued. And when the final tab came in and when a clear picture was finally amassed, that meant for some very difficult decisions to be made over the 1990s. That made for a very difficult reality where you had more money being put into the deficit in supporting the debt than was being spent on education at the time, Mr. Speaker. So that's what the Gass Commission held out in terms of what was proper financial activity for the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation and other Crown corporation entities at the time.

And now we see this government once again moving back down this road. And of course it's relatively early in the game for this kind of activity, Mr. Speaker, as is put forward in this legislation. It involves the \$700,000 of the shortline rail assistance program.

But again, Mr. Speaker, they had that authority before to administer it under the ministry, but of course then it had to be counted as part of government debt. The members opposite, in terms of their disdain for summary financial statements and their need to manage the image of these things, is taking a program that they had the legislative authority for and shifting it off into the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation.

So it's not about being able to conduct new activity, Mr. Speaker. It's about conducting what had been going on in a new way. And that new way happens to coincide with the way that they can manage the appearance of debt and the appearance of the employees that are under the hire of the Government of Saskatchewan.

So I guess that's again, underneath the laudable goals that are put forward on the top of this legislation, at the front end of this legislation, it's always very interesting to see what the gap is, what the cognitive dissonance is between what is the stated intent by the members opposite and the way that this plays out on the ground.

And the way that this plays out, as far as I can tell, Mr. Speaker, is more about issue management or image management for the debt and deficit that the people of Saskatchewan are responsible for and the way that government employees are counted and the ways that the members opposite can then shoehorn different of these rearranged situations into saying, you know, we've completed the four-by-four civil servant reduction, or that, look we've reduced debt. Well if you reduce debt on the one hand, Mr. Speaker, and rack it up on the other and the people are still responsible for it, it's still a responsibility of the people of Saskatchewan. And you should at least be straight with the people about that responsibility.

So I believe that I've got other colleagues that wish to participate in this debate, Mr. Speaker, and as such I will conclude my remarks on this legislation at this time.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure this afternoon to join in on Bill No. 167, *An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act*.

Mr. Speaker, when we're dealing with an Act of this nature and talking about agricultural production and the ways that producers ship the items and the product that they grow to different markets all over the world, Mr. Speaker, certainly this piece of legislation is relevant. And it's an important discussion for us to have in this Assembly. And, Mr. Speaker, we have to think also of the history that we have in this province as being the breadbasket, as it's been referred to. I remember as a child being told that line in the school, and it's important to think of our history of agriculture in the province and the way that it has evolved and changed over the years, Mr. Speaker.

And it's important to also realize and recognize the very important role that agriculture continues to play in our province, as it is the basis for many families as they make their existence. It's the basis of many jobs, of many industries that are associated with the agricultural sector. And it's a means of bringing prosperity to Saskatchewan families; it's a means of bringing wealth to all citizens of the province.

It's a great source of pride for everyone in Saskatchewan, and it's something we're known for here at home and abroad, Mr. Speaker, because we know that the grains and the different items, Mr. Speaker, that are grown here on the prairies certainly do feed the world and are shipped everywhere across the world.

And it's a very important industry for all Saskatchewan people.

So when we think about the issue of the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation and when we look at possible changes to the corporation, we have to, Mr. Speaker, look at the changes in the context of what agriculture means to Saskatchewan and in the context of what Saskatchewan means to the world with respect to the products that are provided to many people all over the globe. But, Mr. Speaker, we have to of course also think of the actual producers, the farmers in our province that are involved in agriculture, those individuals who support their families and build their livelihoods here in the province through agriculture.

And we know, Mr. Speaker, as we look at the landscape of Saskatchewan over the past few years, many farms have celebrated 100 years of existence, of family farms being passed from one generation to the next, and that's a very, very proud thing for families that are associated with reaching that milestone in the history of their farming operation.

And for members in this Assembly, whether they live on a farm or whether they are living in an urban environment, for the vast, vast majority of the members in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, we all have ties to agriculture, either directly — members who are engaged in agriculture — or individuals who have cousins, aunts and uncles, or are one generation off the farm.

So when we're dealing with issues to do with agriculture in Saskatchewan, it's a very important issue, and I know that everyone in Saskatchewan most certainly recognizes that.

When we look at perceptions of Saskatchewan, agriculture is often something the people will mention. And when you look at any calendar for Canada, often the photo that is identified for Saskatchewan is an agricultural landscape of some sort. And while I think that's a wonderful thing, and many people recognize us for our agricultural achievements as a province, of course we know that Saskatchewan's a very diverse province as well, and we're not only agriculture. But that is not to in any way diminish the important role that agriculture has played in Saskatchewan and will continue to play in Saskatchewan for many, many years.

So in looking at Bill No. 167, *An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act*, Mr. Speaker, I approach it with the recognition that agriculture is very important to the province and that when we are making decisions and adjustments in the area of agriculture, it's very important to keep in mind the proud history that we have and the bright future that we also have.

In reading the minister's second reading speech in the Assembly that he provided on April 6, 2011, the minister responsible for this amendment stated that:

This Bill will give the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation the legislative authority to undertake the short-line sustainability grant program, develop other initiatives in the future, and better position the corporation to respond to the needs of rural Saskatchewan. With these legislative amendments, we are proposing to broaden the authority of the Grain Car commission to allow it to become more active in assisting the short-line railway

industry in the province.

And the minister of course went on in his second reading speech.

In looking at the legislative changes itself, Mr. Speaker, they're not overly lengthy as pieces of legislation go that come through this Assembly. One page and a bit are the proposed changes. So when I hear the minister's explanation as to what this piece of legislation is supposed to accomplish, what the goals are, and what is its intent, and when we look at the actual piece of legislation, the amendment that is proposed, and it's Bill 167, *An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act*, we might think that the changes being proposed by the minister aren't perhaps overly substantial. That might be an initial impression someone might have if they simply look at the link of the legislation and some of the initial remarks of the minister.

But as it is, Mr. Speaker, with many types of legislation and many pieces of legislation that we see here in the Assembly, it's very important to look at the full picture. It's very important to examine the piece of legislation and see what some of the implications may be. And these implications can be of different types, Mr. Speaker. They might be intended implications that aren't explicitly stated in the piece of legislation or explicitly stated in the minister's second reading speech or, Mr. Speaker, they could be unintended implications, implications that have not been thought out or thought of, and implications that might need to be learned only through further examination and through further scrutiny. And certainly that is the role of this Assembly.

Once we're into adjourned debates and we're discussing a piece of legislation, we are able to raise some of the questions that people in Saskatchewan want to have asked, raise questions that we as opposition members think are appropriate. To raise questions and to ensure that when the government is proceeding with a piece of legislation, we need to ensure that the changes being suggested by a particular minister and by the government as a whole are in fact appropriate; that the changes that will come to pass are in fact desirable; and that the changes that are to come to pass are expected, they are the proposed intended changes that are to be accomplished through the legislation.

And, Mr. Speaker, when I look at Bill 167, *An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act*, there are a few items, a few issues, Mr. Speaker, that do cause me to have a few questions that I think are appropriate to put on the public record. And I know, Mr. Speaker, it's likely a debate that can continue and carry on in committee as well as we consider the implications of this particular piece of legislation.

When we look at the Bill that is being suggested with respect to the changes, we look at:

“Powers of corporation

12 The corporation may:

- (a) [it says] acquire, by purchase, lease or otherwise, railway rolling stock suitable for the transportation of grain, commodities and other products.

So, Mr. Speaker, we understand that this item clearly states what is to occur — the acquisition of railway stock suitable for the transportation of grain, commodities, and other products.

When we look at the explanation, Mr. Speaker, that is provided with the legislation, which is standard form when pieces of legislation come into the Assembly: “Subsection 12(a) is a wording change intended to clarify that commodities other than agricultural products are hauled.” So what we see, Mr. Speaker, when it says grain commodities and other products, we see by the definition, Mr. Speaker, that this is an expansion of the types of materials that can be hauled as it is stated in the legislation.

[15:00]

So when we’re considering that change, when there’s an expansion, as the explanation would say, to commodities other than agricultural products, Mr. Speaker, it’s important to take that into recognition, understand what the implications may be for the industry, may be for the rail lines that are affected.

Mr. Speaker, we also see that another change is that when we look in 12(b)(ii) it states, “the provision of consulting, management or administrative services to persons who are involved with the railway industry.” So we see an expansion here, Mr. Speaker, of the services that can be provided through consulting and management, and we see that is to the railway industry.

So the question I have, Mr. Speaker, that may be to a smaller company operating a shortline or it could be, Mr. Speaker, to a much larger corporation. And I think that’s an important fact to take into consideration when we consider the types of supports and assistance that may be provided to different players within the industry. It says the railway industry, but it does not explicitly say which companies, which corporations, what is the scope, and what sorts of commitments might be provided, Mr. Speaker. So I know that too may be a concern for some. And it raises important questions that weren’t necessarily addressed in the minister’s second reading speech on this issue.

Another component, Mr. Speaker, that we see in the legislative, or in the changes to the legislation, where under, on the second page of the legislation, under the title:

“Powers of Corporation

12 [it says] The corporation may:

And if we go down to the letter (g), it says:

subject to any orders or directives of Treasury Board, provide financial assistance by way of grant, loan, guarantee or other similar means to persons for the purpose of allowing those persons to acquire railway rolling stock, plant, equipment or other assets that will benefit the railway industry.

So what we have here, Mr. Speaker, I think is the one of the most concerning aspects of this Bill with respect to the implications, either intended or unintended, that may exist within this legislation. It’s one of the most troubling aspects, I think, because what we have here, Mr. Speaker, is the provision

within the legislation that allows the provincial government to basically provide financial assistance through a variety of means to the industry.

And we know, Mr. Speaker, that from a government that is self-professed that it doesn’t want to pick winners and losers in business, we know, Mr. Speaker, that their track record indicates a very different approach when we look at the types of activities that they’re willing to support, who they’re willing to support, and when they’re willing to support these individuals. And while that talk may be convenient at various times, Mr. Speaker, we know that, based on actions that have been discussed in this Assembly, we know that they are more than prepared to follow a different approach.

I know when I think of, Mr. Speaker, the assistance that government may provide to the private sector without openness, without transparency . . . In question period over the past week or so, we’ve talked about the tower development that is proposed in Regina, and we’ve learned that government plans on being a major tenant in the building and is willing to provide a 20-year, sign a 20-year arrangement with the corporation building that project, Mr. Speaker. But we don’t have a willingness from members opposite to provide the details, to provide the information, to give a clear explanation as to what extent the Saskatchewan taxpayer — every individual in this province, all the families who pay taxes, Mr. Speaker — no understanding of to what extent those individuals may in fact be on the hook at the end of the day.

So when we see actions like that, Mr. Speaker, to me that is a concern because we know that the government is more than happy to have special deals with certain players that allow them to support people who they want to support. And it’s not always done, Mr. Speaker, in a way that is open, that is transparent, and that is in the way of all Saskatchewan people. And I think those are the questions that are appropriate to be asked, and it’s the role of the opposition to raise those concerns.

So when we see in the actual piece of legislation where it says:

subject to any orders or directives of Treasury Board, provide financial assistance by way of grant, loan, guarantee or other similar means to persons for the purpose of allowing those persons to acquire railway rolling stock, plant, equipment or other assets that will benefit the railway industry.

Mr. Speaker, and when we read the explanation note, we see that subsection 12(g), it is stated that “. . . is a wording change to provide financial assistance to railways for acquisition of assets.”

So, Mr. Speaker, while the legislation may allow for the government to now take on debt, to funnel cash to certain projects, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan taxpayer, the Saskatchewan citizen is not left with a better understanding with respect to how much is going to flow with respect to financial resources, to which firms, to which companies it will flow, Mr. Speaker. We clearly saw in an earlier change when we talked about “the provision of consulting, management or administrative services to persons who are involved with the railway industry.” So a very large banner, so we don’t know the

size of the companies that will be assisted or the names of the companies that will be assisted.

And now we also see, Mr. Speaker, that the government is willing to provide financial assistance to the railways in order to, I would assume, Mr. Speaker, allow them to provide a service. The catch is, Mr. Speaker, as we often see with respect to these types of arrangements, the government is often rather murky on the details. The government is often very, very cloudy when it comes to the openness and transparency that is needed in order to ensure that the Saskatchewan taxpayers' interests, the citizens of this province are in fact being respected, are being treated well and that the deal is good for everyone in the province, not just a select few. And, Mr. Speaker, good for not just a select few companies, in order to ensure that it's a level playing field for all companies.

And, Mr. Speaker, another example that we saw in recent days with respect to how the government is more than happy to create an uneven playing field for businesses in the province was something I raised yesterday in question period, Mr. Speaker, with the special Modus deal that occurred in Swift Current where we saw an initial tender that went out for a project, but then we saw the nature of the project with respect to the type of buildings that were being sought through the tender and we saw the scope of the project, Mr. Speaker, the number of units being provided through that tender increase substantially. I believe it was a 55 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker, from the original tender to what actually transpired at the end.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, if we are to treat businesses fairly in this province, it's appropriate to have a tendering process that is honest with the businesses that are wanting to participate and go after government contracts. And what we saw in the instance in the Swift Current situation, we saw government choosing to have a tendering process that is not fair and does not create a level playing field for all Saskatchewan businesses.

And that's my concern, when we see government in this piece of legislation talking about providing grants, loans, guarantees "... or other similar means to persons for the purpose of allowing those persons to acquire railway rolling stock, plant, equipment or other assets will benefit the railway industry" and, Mr. Speaker, when we see just before that, in legislative changes, where it talks about the railway industry without providing the specifics of which companies may benefit in what areas, and what sort of connections that may exist, Mr. Speaker. Those are the types of concerns I have by simply allowing government to take an approach where they ask us to once again to simply trust them, that they will defend the public interest, that they will defend the public good.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we certainly recognize that agricultural producers in the province face many challenges. Mr. Speaker, weather in this time of year in various parts of the province, there are major concerns with moisture, with water that is occurring in Saskatchewan. And some areas had problems last year and some before that with the amount of water on their land, and things now are very saturated in some parts of the province, Mr. Speaker. And we know that that puts financial strains on farmers. And we know that with input costs seeming to always increase but rarely decrease, Mr. Speaker, we know

that for many Saskatchewan farm families it's more and more difficult for them to make ends meet and to carry on that tradition that is so proud in our province.

When I talked about the milestone that many Saskatchewan farm families are reaching by having their farm reach 100 years of age and the ceremony that is attached with that, and the plaque or the marker that is available to farms with that, that's a great and a positive thing, Mr. Speaker. But we do know that many Saskatchewan farm families are under pressure and have many concerns. And so that's related to mother nature, creation, Mr. Speaker. And some of the things are unpredictable, whether that's too much rain or too little rain. Mr. Speaker. It's related to high input costs that many farmers have to wrestle with and make choices with respect to the decisions that they make on their farm.

And, Mr. Speaker, we know that transportation costs are a major concern as well, whether that is access to rail. And, Mr. Speaker, we know the increased pressures that increased hauling and trucking on our roads does have for the infrastructure that we have in the province, that those are important things that need to be addressed, Mr. Speaker, as farmers are having to haul their grain longer and longer distances to different terminals, Mr. Speaker.

So we know that these are real concerns, and I believe that it is important to have leadership and the right kind of decisions made that does in fact make life easier, better, more viable, and more prosperous for Saskatchewan, for our families. I think that's a very important thing, and I think that's the approach that government ought to take.

My concern is, Mr. Speaker, as we've seen with this piece of legislation and other examples, is the absence of the details which can cause me to have the assurance that government is in fact acting in the best interests of Saskatchewan families, Saskatchewan farm families, Mr. Speaker. And so whether it's the undefined nature of the railway industry as one concern that has been highlighted in this piece of legislation . . . Which firms will benefit? Which companies will benefit? Will these be very large players? Will these be smaller players?

And since we don't know who exactly will benefit through this proposed legislation, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the railway industry, we also don't know who will benefit as producers through these decisions. Will it be localized in particular areas? Will the benefit be experienced throughout the province? These are concerns and question marks that I have, and based on some of the previous actions we've seen with this government, I'm not prepared to simply trust them on this fact without having more of the details.

Now the other concern, Mr. Speaker, about the transparency aspect, I guess. An additional concern beyond the transparency aspect is this issue of debt and this issue of lending and the issue of what it means for the public books. And we know in this province, Mr. Speaker, after coming through the time of Conservative government under Grant Devine, we saw an approach, Mr. Speaker, where the government was more than willing to add more and more debt to the province's books. And that has been an effect that has been felt through subsequent governments and will affect subsequent generations for some

time to come, Mr. Speaker, because of the government's willingness to take on more and more public debt.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what we saw in the past were different types of public debt. Sometimes it was clearly stated and it was easily known. It was easily identifiable because it was on the public books. And individuals who, Mr. Speaker, had an interest in understanding and evaluating the financial health of the province, individuals were able to access some of the information on the public record. And that is an appropriate thing, Mr. Speaker, and that, in my view, is how it should occur when government is taking on debt on behalf of everyone in the province, every citizen, every taxpayer.

It's important that everyone actually know what the terms are. How much is being borrowed? How much will the government, the taxpayer of the province have to pay for the debt that's being acquired? How soon will it be paid off, and what are the implications for the overall financial picture of the financial health of the province? And so that's the one type of debt, Mr. Speaker, where it's easily known. It's easily identifiable. It's open. It's transparent. And citizens are able to examine what are the debts of the province and are able to make their judgment on a government accordingly.

[15:15]

Another type of debt we see, Mr. Speaker, is lending that is off the books and is not as easily found, not as easily identifiable, but at the same time, Mr. Speaker, has just as great of consequences for the provincial treasury, has a significant impact on the daily lives of Saskatchewan people. And we also saw, Mr. Speaker, a lot of — in the era of the Conservative government — we did see a lot of this type of lending as well, Mr. Speaker, where it was not openly known to Saskatchewan people. There were many secret deals, or there was an absence of transparency. There were many problems associated. There were loan guarantees. There were sweetheart deals with particular companies in particular areas. And, Mr. Speaker, I think it can be said safely that a lot of that lending that occurred was not in the best interest of Saskatchewan people, was not in the best interest of Saskatchewan families.

So I'm concerned, Mr. Speaker, realizing that our province has experienced that type of financial mismanagement in the past. And we do know that some members opposite, Mr. Speaker, have deep and close ties, ongoing ties with many of the players involved during that troubling time in Saskatchewan's history, Mr. Speaker. My concern is that we're following a similar path here and that it's déjà vu all over again, Mr. Speaker.

We do know that in reading some of the remarks that other members have made in the Assembly concerning Bill No. 167 . . . And I'll remind readers at home, Mr. Speaker, Bill 167 is *An Act to Amend the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act*. In preparing for this speech, I had the chance to read a few comments made by other speakers from our side of the House who wanted to comment on this. And I read, Mr. Speaker, the speech from the member from Saskatoon Nutana. And while this member is still sitting in the Assembly and very engaged and very active, Mr. Speaker, I think many people in Saskatchewan will know that this member has indicated that she does not plan to run again, and she has had a very long and

distinguished career here in the Assembly, and has contributed to many debates that have occurred in the province, and she's participated in those debates from both sides of the House during different times, Mr. Speaker.

And when the member from Nutana commented on this piece of legislation, she said:

Well, Mr. Speaker, we are now moving back to the past. And I would remind the members opposite that in 1991, under the recommendations of Donald Gass, we wrote off \$36 million in debt that had been accrued by the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation. And my colleagues have talked about the history of the Grain Car Corporation. It was not unlike Alberta did, Manitoba, as well as the Government of Canada, to get enough cars on the track to get grain to market.

The important point here, Mr. Speaker, that the member from Nutana is making is that she said, "And I would remind the members opposite that in 1991, under the recommendations from Donald Gass, we wrote off \$36 million in debt that had been accrued by the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation."

So we see, Mr. Speaker, in this province during the 1980s under the Conservative government, a government that has many strong ties to the existing Sask Party government — and there's a lot of overlap of the players involved — we saw, Mr. Speaker, an approach to financial management that was not in the best interests of Saskatchewan people. We saw a very reckless approach to financial management. We saw an approach of lending dollars, of providing financing, of giving loan guarantees, of entering into deals, Mr. Speaker, sweetheart deal that were not well known.

And the end result, Mr. Speaker, was that through the Gass report there was an examination of the lending and the financial practices of the provincial government. And it was determined, Mr. Speaker, that there were many, many problems. We saw an approach where there was not full disclosure. We saw an approach that was not transparent. We saw an approach that endangered the financial viability of this province close to the brink of bankruptcy, Mr. Speaker, based on the actions of the members opposite at that time, though there are certainly great connections ongoing with the current government and the members of the past.

And so when we see, Mr. Speaker, similar types of actions where the government is getting into this business of entering into deals without the details being known, without the players being identified — simply saying railway industry, not identifying who exactly they're talking about — when we see government talking about providing financial assistance through a variety of means, to me that is concerning because, though I was perhaps not paying attention as closely to politics in the 1980s as I do now, Mr. Speaker, I, like many other Saskatchewan people, have lived through the consequences of that time. And the consequences of that time, Mr. Speaker, were many troubling years and consequences of debt and a restraining of what government can do because of the debt that is associated with the debt burden that was brought on through those types of practices. So those are some of the concerns I have around this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

As I wrap up my remarks, Mr. Speaker, on this piece of legislation, I want to state once again that Saskatchewan has a very proud history of agriculture, a history that the vast majority of Saskatchewan people have ties to, either through current involvement or recent involvement, Mr. Speaker. And we know that support for our agricultural producers is a very important thing. And we know that having a strong and vibrant agricultural sector is something that is very important.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that there are increased pressures on the family farm. We know that through weather, we know through increased input costs, we know through world market influences, things that are beyond the control of Saskatchewan producers, that many Saskatchewan farm families face problems. Many Saskatchewan farm families are in an uphill battle. So, Mr. Speaker, we know that when making decisions about agriculture in this province, it's important to do so cognizant of those realities for Saskatchewan farm families.

We also know, Mr. Speaker, that there have been different economic times experienced in this province, and different approaches to the financial health and the type of debt that is acquired here in the province. We know, Mr. Speaker, that there are different ways that debt has been accrued by the provincial government, sometimes in an open and transparent way, sometimes in a way that is not transparent. But nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, the implications for Saskatchewan people are very great.

We also know, Mr. Speaker, that with the proposed changes in this piece of legislation, Bill No. 167, *An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act*, we know that there's a lot of ambiguity with some of the changes that the minister is suggesting. We know that there is . . . It now talks about not simply grain but also commodities. We know that it makes reference to the railway industry without specifically identifying which companies stand to benefit, Mr. Speaker. And because we don't know the details around that, we also don't know which Saskatchewan farm families stand to benefit and if a real gain in their financial outlook will be experienced or if it will have a negative effect or a neutral effect. We don't know that, Mr. Speaker.

And we also know, Mr. Speaker, that the government is now more than happy to be in the business of providing grants, loans, guarantees, or other similar means to persons for the purpose of allowing those persons to acquire railway rolling stock plant equipment or other assets that will benefit the railway industry. So we know, Mr. Speaker, that the government is willing to provide significant and substantial financial assistance to the railway industry, but we don't know to what extent in the years to come.

We don't know, Mr. Speaker, to which specific players will be assisted, and I think that is troubling especially when we look at the track record of this government in other deals, other deals — whether that's the taxpayers tower that is proposed here in Regina, whether that is the Modus relocatable classrooms that were a one-off deal in the Swift Current constituency, Mr. Speaker, or whether that is the Amicus deal that has been discussed at length in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, or whether that was some of the murky dealings with respect to the sale of Parkridge in Saskatoon as well, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to deals that are not transparent, when it comes to deals that are not in the best interests of Saskatchewan taxpayers, when it comes to deals that benefit a select few insiders but not the entire Saskatchewan population, when it comes to deals, Mr. Speaker, that can have serious long-lasting implications for the financial health of this province, Mr. Speaker, we know that members opposite, through their current actions and through their actions past in the 1980s, that they are more than happy, more than happy to engage in those types of those deals. So when I see that track record and when I see this type of legislation, Mr. Speaker, that is big on dollars but small on details, I certainly have some concerns.

And so with that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks on Bill No. 167. Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased this afternoon to enter into debate on this very important Bill, *An Act to Amend the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act*, Mr. Speaker.

In our province, we have a very long and proud history being a producer province, Mr. Speaker, and providing food for not only our province and Canadians, Mr. Speaker, but around the world. And, Mr. Speaker, that heritage of our province in providing food for the people of our world and around the world, Mr. Speaker, goes back many, many years. And, Mr. Speaker, over the last 100 years or so that we have been major producers, agriculture producers, Mr. Speaker, we have seen changes occur. And the Grain Car Corporation or the . . . [inaudible] . . . to the Grain Car Corporation was one of those changes, Mr. Speaker.

In the early 1970s there was a challenge in moving our products to market, Mr. Speaker, a challenge that needed to be taken up by somebody in order to ensure that our products would hit the markets around the world, Mr. Speaker, and not directly just on the railcars, Mr. Speaker, but to ports where they could then be loaded on ships and transported to other parts of the country. And, Mr. Speaker, in the 1970s there was a need and there was a void. So what happened?

Now, Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan in 1970 stepped up and put in place the Grain Car Corporation, Mr. Speaker. And it was there to assist producers in a method of purchasing cars so that we had a fleet of cars that could provide to take our products to market, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, in the 1970s about 1,000, or I believe it was 1,000 grain cars were purchased, Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of assisting the movement of our products to market. Mr. Speaker, that was a very appropriate acquisition at the time, Mr. Speaker. It helped both local Saskatchewan producers, Mr. Speaker, but it also, Mr. Speaker, helped the railways. And at the time it was a needed injection of capital into the system, Mr. Speaker, in order to ensure that the farmers' products, our Saskatchewan farmers' products, were able to get to market.

And, Mr. Speaker, being an agrarian province like we are, in the 1970s we probably had about 60 per cent, between 50 and 60 per cent of our gross domestic product one way or the other

came from agriculture, Mr. Speaker. Today it wouldn't be anywhere near that percentage, Mr. Speaker, because we have a much larger and more diversified economy. But, Mr. Speaker, in some ways some of the challenges that we faced in the 1970s are once again faced by producers in our province, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, but with every piece of legislation there is both the positives and the negatives, and there are concerns and issues that need to be fully debated, fully understood, and fully put before the people of Saskatchewan prior to being implemented. Well, Mr. Speaker, if we look at the changes being made to *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act*, Mr. Speaker, it talks about . . . Section 12 is about the powers of the corporation, Mr. Speaker, and that's where the changes are being made. Powers of the corporation itself are being amended and changed, Mr. Speaker.

[15:30]

And I want to go through what the powers of the corporation are so that the people of Saskatchewan have the opportunity to understand what the Grain Car Corporation has the ability to do. Under section 12(a), Mr. Speaker, it has the ability to "acquire, by purchase, lease or otherwise, railway rolling stock suitable for the transportation of grain, commodities and other products," Mr. Speaker. Well that is, Mr. Speaker, the historical responsibility of the Grain Car Corporation, Mr. Speaker.

But section 12(b) says it has the ability to "enter into agreements with the Canadian Wheat Board, railways and others respecting: the use of railway rolling stock, plant, equipment or other assets acquired by the corporation." So the corporation can in fact acquire assets beyond the rolling stock, Mr. Speaker.

It also has, Mr. Speaker, "the provision of consulting, management or administrative services [that can be paid for] to persons who are involved with the railway industry." And, Mr. Speaker, it also has the ability to enter into agreements for "any other purposes that the corporation considers advisable."

And, Mr. Speaker, that leaves a very wide and broad mandate to the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation. And, Mr. Speaker, it's in examining that broad mandate and its responsibilities within that mandate that we need to look at what liabilities, risks, and benefits that are there for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, the producers of our province, and our province in general, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if we go on to look in a little more detail at other sections of the powers, Mr. Speaker, on section (e) it says you can "enter into agreements for the maintenance, servicing, repair and upkeep of railway rolling stock, plant, equipment or other assets acquired by the corporation." Now, Mr. Speaker, that would seem on the surface to be pretty straightforward, Mr. Speaker. If you have a fleet of rolling stock, Mr. Speaker, it has to be maintained. There needs to be regular changes made.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, over the last decade I can remember, just prior to the last election, there was a period of time in which the, all the cars that were owned by the Grain Car Corporation, Mr. Speaker, required changes to their wheel base, Mr. Speaker, to the structure. Mr. Speaker, that's something that has to be

done on a regular basis if you're going to keep your fleet up to date, Mr. Speaker, make it as efficient and safe as possible. And so those types of maintenance and repairs to be undertaken by the corporation would be a normal business activity for the Grain Car Corporation, Mr. Speaker.

They can also "construct or acquire, by purchase, lease or otherwise, any plant equipment or other assets that the corporation considers beneficial for the railway industry," Mr. Speaker. So it gives a broad mandate for the corporation to purchase and acquire other assets that are in the interest of the railway industry, Mr. Speaker. It also has the ability to "transfer, sell or otherwise dispose of any railway rolling stock, plant, equipment [and] or other assets acquired by the corporation."

Now these are all fairly standard clauses that you would see in a business entity such as the Grain Car Corporation, Mr. Speaker. From time to time as your needs change or your assets perhaps age and somebody else has an interest in purchasing your assets as you need newer, more up-to-date assets, Mr. Speaker, you would dispose of or sell off some assets and purchase others, Mr. Speaker. Those are normal transactions done by any business, Mr. Speaker.

Now it also allows or provides for "the means by which grain, commodities or other products . . . in Saskatchewan or elsewhere may be transported." And again those, it's just clearly outlining what the powers of the corporation is.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have a new clause today which does create some concern for, I think, the province of Saskatchewan, the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. In the clause (g) it says:

subject to any orders or directives of the Treasury Board, [Mr. Speaker, that would be the government in power] provide financial assistance by way of grant, loan, [loan] guarantee or other similar means to persons for the purpose of allowing those persons to acquire railway rolling stock, plant, equipment or other assets that will benefit the railway industry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is a concern because during a period of time in the 1980s we had a provision that allowed the government to undertake similar guarantees and debt on behalf of third parties, Mr. Speaker, in the Grain Car Corporation, and it resulted in a significant, significant amount of debt and loss that had to be written down by the province of Saskatchewan in 1992, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan had to write down some \$36 million after 1992 that was lost through inappropriate loan guarantees and investments, Mr. Speaker, through the Grain Car Corporation during the 1980s.

But, Mr. Speaker, the concern is that we're going down the same path we have been down once before, Mr. Speaker. We're going backwards, Mr. Speaker. We're going down the same path that we saw in the 1980s, and it has the potential, it has the potential, Mr. Speaker, to create the same types of liabilities and risks for the people of Saskatchewan that we saw during the 1980s, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, after the 1980s there was a commission

called the Gass Commission that undertook an in-depth examination of how the government, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, should enter into agreements, and what it should participate in and what it shouldn't participate in, and what types of rules and regulations should be in place when entering into these agreements, Mr. Speaker. And that was after the province had to write down some \$36 million from the Grain Car Corporation alone.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we see this government entering into numerous long-term commitments on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan without any transparency, without any ability of the people of Saskatchewan to review whether those contracts, leases that are being entered into on their behalf are in the best interests of the province of Saskatchewan and are suitable for use of their tax dollars, Mr. Speaker. Because governments don't have money that don't belong to the people and, Mr. Speaker, the people should have a right in determining how their money is being spent.

Mr. Speaker, in the early 1980s — 1984-85, I believe it was, Mr. Speaker — we saw the government then, the Conservative government of the 1980s enter into a very, very long-term lease, Mr. Speaker, on a nursing home, on a nursing home in Saskatoon which we have been trying to get answers to what it actually cost for some time.

Mr. Speaker, last night in committee, last night in committee, Mr. Speaker, we got an answer from the Ministry of Government Services that on that very, very, very same nursing home project in Saskatoon, that the then Conservative government entered into a 25-year lease, Mr. Speaker, the impact or cost to the people of the province of Saskatchewan for a nursing home that would have cost about \$8 million at the time to build, Mr. Speaker, about \$8 million to build over a lease of twenty-three and a half years, Mr. Speaker, it cost the taxpayers of . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. I'm having trouble hearing the speaker. I would ask the member to continue debate on the Bill, which is *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Amendment Act, 2011*.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was talking about agreements and the financial impact of those agreements on the people of Saskatchewan. And like we see now in the Grain Car Corporation Act, there was an ability for the government to enter in, there is ability for the government to enter into long-term grants or loans or guarantees on behalf of the people Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And I was pointing out that in the 1980s, early 1980s, the government entered into a 25-year arrangement for a nursing home called Parkridge in Saskatoon, for a capital construction project that would have been about \$8 million at the time it was built, Mr. Speaker. And that lease, we finally got the numbers for that lease last night, Mr. Speaker, in committee. And over that period of time, Mr. Speaker, between 1985 to today, Mr. Speaker, 2011, the lease on that property cost the people of Saskatchewan . . . Now I hope everybody's sitting down because it cost the people of Saskatchewan to lease that

property more than \$60 million — \$60 million that, had we paid a cash payment, as you should on those properties, of about \$8 million, Mr. Speaker, we would have saved the people of Saskatchewan some \$52 million.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is what is a concern in the Bill, Mr. Speaker, *An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act* because they can enter into agreements on and put at risk public dollars, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we've seen the Grain Car Corporation in the 1980s enter into similar agreements, and we saw a writedown, Mr. Speaker. And this is coming from the *Report of the Saskatchewan Financial Management Review Commission*, Mr. Speaker, better known as the Gass Commission, Mr. Speaker, a very detailed examination of how government money was spent and should be spent, Mr. Speaker. And we saw a very similar provision as we see being put back into the Grain Car Corporation Act today result in a \$36 million writedown of the taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker. So we wrote off a \$36 million loss as a result of guaranteeing loans, Mr. Speaker, that were not repayable.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we saw similar things in a nursing home project in the same period of time in the city of Saskatoon called Parkridge, which was about an \$8 million capital construction project at the time it was built, cost the taxpayers more than \$60 million to lease that property back from a third party. Very lucrative deal for that company, Mr. Speaker, but not very good for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, why am I raising these issues as I'm talking about this piece of legislation? Mr. Speaker, I think it should become clear. The provision we see in clause (g) of the Act gives the government the ability to enter into similar types of arrangements that they did in the 1980s which resulted in a \$36 million loss for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, we see on the other hand the Government of Saskatchewan now again entering into 25-year leases, long-term leases on property, Mr. Speaker, that could cost the people of Saskatchewan even more than the Parkridge agreement, Mr. Speaker. And we have no means to look and challenge whether or not it's appropriate, Mr. Speaker, because there is absolutely no transparency. The government refuses to reveal or to bring forward the information on those tenders, Mr. Speaker, or on those leases, Mr. Speaker. And it's taxpayers' money.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a pattern here. We have a government that is following a pattern of activity that was followed in the 1980s under the previous Conservative government, Mr. Speaker, and putting in place the same abilities that they had in those years that resulted in significant losses in taxpayers' money. So, Mr. Speaker, that's a significant issue. That is a significant issue to the people of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't define, doesn't define who these individuals would be. It says:

subject to any orders or directives of Treasury Board, provide financial assistance by way of grant, loan, guarantee or other similar means to persons for the purpose of allowing those persons to acquire railway rolling stock, plant, equipment or other assets that will

benefit the railway industry.

Mr. Speaker, that isn't publicly debated in this Assembly. We don't know what potential liabilities the government may enter into on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. But what we do know is the Gass report said we shouldn't be doing it. The Gass report indicated very clearly this was not the way, was not the way that government should enter into arrangements on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're going backwards again. We're going backwards to an era that saw significant financial loss to the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we see other similar arrangements being entered into. Mr. Speaker, we saw an arrangement that will see the Government of Saskatchewan guaranteeing up to \$252 million in the immigrant investor program, Mr. Speaker, where the Government of Saskatchewan is guaranteeing loans on behalf of the immigrant investor funds, Mr. Speaker. We got out of those very funds a number of years ago because they changed the rules that you had to guarantee those funds, Mr. Speaker. You had to guarantee those loans, Mr. Speaker, and those investments.

[15:45]

And the previous government, because of the Gass Commission and rules that were put in place in this province governing how you manage the people's money, we got out of using immigrant investor funds, Mr. Speaker. Because you need to have a level of protection on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan when you're guaranteeing loans, Mr. Speaker, and if you don't have that level of protection, you don't enter into those arrangements, Mr. Speaker. So the previous government got out of using immigrant investor funds because there wasn't the security required to guarantee those investments.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if the public dollar is at risk and we are putting public dollars at risk on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we need to be very prudent in doing that. We need to be very, very prudent because the money that the Government of Saskatchewan gets — whether it be from resources, from our utilities, or from taxes, Mr. Speaker, or any of our sources of revenue; transfer payments from the federal government even, Mr. Speaker — it's the people's money. It's not the government's money. It's not the Crown corporations' money, Mr. Speaker. It is the people's money, Mr. Speaker. The people own the resources, Mr. Speaker. The people pay the taxes, Mr. Speaker. The people pay federal taxes to the federal government which results in us getting some transfer payments back. It doesn't matter how you look at the issue, Mr. Speaker, it is the people's money.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we are in fact providing guarantees or loans or grants of public money, Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that there is appropriate guarantees and financial stability around those investments.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is most unclear who would be eligible to borrow this money, who would be eligible to get grants, and who would be eligible to enter into agreements that would get public money, Mr. Speaker. It's very open. It does say it would

be the Treasury Board of the province, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, we haven't seen a stellar record in the last year about entering into agreements on behalf of public money. I think we have to look no further than St. Peter's College, Mr. Speaker, and the Carlton Trail merger to see millions of taxpayers' dollars put at risk. And now, hundreds of thousands of dollars on auditors to try to find out what occurred there, Mr. Speaker, because we had a ministry and a minister enter into an agreement with a known felon, Mr. Speaker. A known felon — somebody that had been convicted of fraud, Mr. Speaker.

The minister was aware of this conviction. He was made aware of these convictions, Mr. Speaker, and he continued — continued, Mr. Speaker — showing confidence in this individual even though the opposition raised this issue several times, Mr. Speaker. The opposition raised this issue several times in several different forms, Mr. Speaker. The government continued to show confidence and continued down a path, Mr. Speaker, until they had no other course, until it was so obvious, Mr. Speaker, the financial mismanagement and financial problems. And now we're spending over \$400,000 on auditors, Mr. Speaker — again, taxpayers' money — to straighten out the mess that a minister got us into.

And, Mr. Speaker, how's that supposed to give public confidence to the people of Saskatchewan? How is that supposed to encourage the public of Saskatchewan to look at any decisions made with confidence, Mr. Speaker? And I think it, Mr. Speaker, raises grave concerns that we're going down a path of guaranteeing money again, which we haven't done in this method since the 1980s. And, Mr. Speaker, we need to be concerned about that.

Now having said that, all of us in this Assembly, I think and I believe, all of us support the industry. We support our producers, and we want to see a vibrant railway industry and producer grain car industry in our province, Mr. Speaker, because it's essential to our way of life. It is absolutely essential to our way of life. We understand that. But, Mr. Speaker, what's most important is the due diligence that goes on prior to putting at risk taxpayers' money in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have seen, raised just yesterday in this House, an agreement made with a company in Swift Current to build modular classrooms, Mr. Speaker. And lo and behold, upon examination, what do we find? An admission by the minister herself that they're paying \$75,000 more per unit, Mr. Speaker, than the school boards could build themselves. And this is a deal that wasn't tendered, Mr. Speaker, was never tendered, the final deal. It was sole sourced, given to a Swift Current company in the Premier's riding, Mr. Speaker. That was political interference, Mr. Speaker, a sole source contract to a business that was having financial trouble in the Premier's riding to build modular classrooms at \$75,000 more than school boards could buy.

Mr. Speaker, what confidence does that give me and the people of Saskatchewan that under the Grain Car Corporation Act the government or Treasury Board is going to enter into value-for-dollar contracts, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, why would we expect it to be any different in the Grain Car Corporation, Mr. Speaker, than we saw it in, Mr. Speaker, in the modular classrooms? Mr. Speaker, you need to ensure that

you're protecting public dollars and getting value for dollars when you enter into agreements on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

We had the opportunity to meet with school boards who told us they didn't buy the modular classrooms because, one, they were considerably more expensive than what they could build themselves. And, Mr. Speaker, how do I have any greater confidence that they'll enter into agreements or guarantee grants or loans to third parties that have the value for dollar that Saskatchewan people deserve to see, deserve to see, Mr. Speaker, on any investment that's made or any loan or guarantee or grant that's made on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan?

Now, Mr. Speaker, I heard one of the members opposite say, put kids in grain cars. Well I don't know what . . . You know, that is so ridiculous it doesn't deserve comment, Mr. Speaker. It does not deserve comment. Mr. Speaker, our children, our children deserve more respect than that and, Mr. Speaker, they'll get it from this side of the Assembly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, looking at, looking at the fundamental issue of investment of public dollars, the investment of public dollars, we all have a responsibility to ensure that there's prudent investment. And, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, if they have ever read the Gass Commission, it's contained on page 132 of the full document, Mr. Speaker, *Report of the Saskatchewan Financial Management Review Commission*. It came out in February 1992. It's probably the most in-depth review of government fiscal management that's occurred in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And the Gass Commission, it was looked at, Mr. Speaker, as a model across not just this province but around this country, Mr. Speaker.

And the recommendations contained within the Gass report were thoughtful. This report took some time to examine in detail the financial operations of the Government of Saskatchewan under the then Conservative government, Mr. Speaker, and to make recommendations on moving forward. And it identified many negative pitfalls of how governments or how that government had operated, Mr. Speaker, and recommendations to ensure that we didn't go down similar paths again.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have concerns that we're headed down that path again because during that period in the 1980s, the Grain Car Corporation guaranteed loans, Mr. Speaker, loaned money to individuals. Those loans were never repayable, Mr. Speaker. And then in 1992, Mr. Speaker, the Grain Car Corporation, the Government of Saskatchewan on behalf of the Grain Car Corporation, had to write down \$36 million in bad loans.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that was only one of several writedowns, that was only one of several writedowns that were undertaken in that year because the government had entered into a large number of arrangements, Mr. Speaker, that resulted in a failure of repayment, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, today we're talking about the Grain Car Corporation amendment Act, Mr. Speaker, and we're talking about the ability under that Act for the government to enter into agreements to loan money, to grant money, or to guarantee

money, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan to third party individuals, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, do those loans, Mr. Speaker, come under direct scrutiny of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker? No, Mr. Speaker, those decisions will be made by the Treasury Board of the government in power, Mr. Speaker, a government who we are well aware of in the St. Peter's College and Carlton Trail attempted merger, Mr. Speaker, now are paying not one, not two, not three, Mr. Speaker, but four different accounting firms, Mr. Speaker, to examine and review what's going on at a cost of some \$400,000 to the taxpayers, Mr. Speaker. And that is what raises the very serious concerns that members on this side of the House have with this particular clause, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, clause (h), the final clause that's being changed, Mr. Speaker, says:

do any other thing that the corporation considers necessary, incidental or conducive to meeting its objectives and purposes or to exercising its powers".

Mr. Speaker, that is a clause that gives it very broad powers, Mr. Speaker, and a very broad ability to spend money. Mr. Speaker, once again I want to indicate the Grain Car Corporation is a Saskatchewan government entity, Mr. Speaker, in which we have a significant potential liability if in fact money is spent inappropriately.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's in all our interests not to find ourselves putting liabilities into the Grain Car Corporation that we know, that we know we aren't going to have paid off, Mr. Speaker. To go into loans that we know we'll never be able to see repaid or to give grants to people, Mr. Speaker, of taxpayer's money, Mr. Speaker, needs to be done very carefully and very prudently, Mr. Speaker, and, Mr. Speaker, needs to be done very carefully.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation and its amendments are taking us back to the 1980s and a period of time in which the government ran up significant debts on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, significant debts on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan that had to be written off. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that we as taxpayers in the province of Saskatchewan, the people of the province of Saskatchewan need to be concerned because, Mr. Speaker, this is exactly where we were some 20 years ago, a little over 20 years ago, Mr. Speaker — 25 years ago, pardon me, Mr. Speaker — and we don't want to go back. We don't want to go back to a situation where we don't have adequate controls or that we're paying far more for things than what they're worth.

And if I couldn't point to, Mr. Speaker, two very recent examples. I'm talking about the Modus agreement for modular classrooms, Mr. Speaker, where you can talk to any of the school boards around the province of Saskatchewan and, by the minister's own admission, we're paying \$75,000 more than what school boards could build them for themselves.

And, Mr. Speaker, that was done with a company on a sole-source contract, Mr. Speaker, in the Premier's riding. So anybody that believes there was not political interference, Mr. Speaker, and this was not, was not a deal that wasn't in the best interest of the people of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr.

Speaker, are fooling themselves because when you're \$75,000 more than what the value is on a modular classroom that should cost about \$100,000, Mr. Speaker, that is a concern. That is a serious concern to the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

[16:00]

And, Mr. Speaker, when we can point to the merger attempt of St. Peter's College and Carlton Trail, Mr. Speaker, in which serious concerns were raised very early in the process, Mr. Speaker, by the official opposition and by community leaders, Mr. Speaker, and a government, in its blind, dogged determination to do something on behalf of a friend, Mr. Speaker, plows ahead and puts at risk significant taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker, then why wouldn't we have concerns about changes that resulted in a Conservative government in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, were running up over \$36 million of debt that had to be written off, Mr. Speaker, in a manner that's very similar to today.

So, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite seem to want to, they want to try to say well, you know, no big deal, no problem. They don't take, Mr. Speaker, they don't take the use of public money seriously enough, Mr. Speaker, if they don't take these concerns being raised by the official opposition seriously because, Mr. Speaker . . .

An Hon. Member: — Nobody takes you seriously.

Mr. Yates: — They can yell across that nobody takes us seriously, and they can say whatever they want, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they can say whatever they want, Mr. Speaker, but they're the ones that are entering into contracts for modular classrooms that are worth \$75,000 more than what the market is, Mr. Speaker. And they are the ones wasting Saskatchewan taxpayers' money. Well, Mr. Speaker, and we need to be diligent, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the government doesn't enter into inappropriate, inappropriate guarantees, loans, or grants through the Grain Car Corporation Act, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have spent some time talking about the very seriousness of these changes being made, Mr. Speaker, and the potential liability on the people of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And so at this time, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat to allow my other colleagues the opportunity to enter into the debate, Mr. Speaker, and to share their perspective on the future changes that are being on the Grain Car Corporation Act and the impact it will have on the people of the . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. I'll ask the member from Athabasca to come to order. There is a member on his feet. I can't hear him speaking. I would ask the member from Regina Dewdney to continue debate on *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act*.

Mr. Yates: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I was concluding my remarks and indicating that at this time there are other members who wish to enter into the debate and bring their perspective and concerns about this particular piece of legislation to the public of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So at this time I'll take my chair.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak at second reading of Bill No. 167, *An Act to amend the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act*. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise and speak on this Bill, Mr. Speaker, for a number of reasons. Number one, of course, is that agriculture in Saskatchewan is hugely important, Mr. Speaker, very important to the people of Saskatchewan whether you farm or not. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the rail lines are very important to Saskatchewan, to agriculture, to other industries, and again to the people of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, this province has a very strong and proud history around the whole area of rail transportation, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to make some comments in that regard throughout my time on my feet, Mr. Speaker. Just in advance of some of the specifics, I want to indicate quite clearly that I think that it's very important that the province of Saskatchewan — through its government, through its communities, Mr. Speaker, through the efforts that are made on behalf of public officials — support shortline railways throughout the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It's important that we do that. Any move that governments can make and can explain to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that ultimately support the movement of grain, that support the workings and operation of shortline railways, and which, Mr. Speaker, serve the transportation of goods and services between and away from our communities, Mr. Speaker, is a benefit to all of us.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is if this Bill had only to do what the minister says it will do then, Mr. Speaker, our speeches would be very short. They'd be very supportive and we'd move forward. But, Mr. Speaker, throughout my remarks this afternoon, I want to explain what it is that this Bill does, Mr. Speaker. This Bill decreases transparency. Mr. Speaker, this Bill increases liability and debt. Mr. Speaker, this Bill transfers responsibility from the public to a smaller separate group within government, Mr. Speaker. Decision making is taken out of the hands of the public, Mr. Speaker, which back to my first point, reduces transparency.

Mr. Speaker, let's go back for a few moments to the day that this legislation was introduced. Mr. Speaker, this legislation was introduced a very short period of time ago on April the 6th, just a couple week ago, Mr. Speaker. This Bill was introduced by the Minister of Highways, and it's most appropriate that the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure is the minister responsible for rail, Mr. Speaker. It just makes perfect sense.

For far too long, and I'm going to talk about this in greater detail later, Mr. Speaker, but for far too long the rail lines, the established long-term national rail lines, Mr. Speaker, have been taking advantage of provinces like Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, where they have taken and turned our highways into branch lines. The railway considers the Saskatchewan highway system as its branch line corridor, Mr. Speaker. And I will speak at greater length about that in a few minutes.

But, Mr. Speaker, because our history is so closely tied to rail and because, in the minister's own words, it's important that we

get more of the heavy traffic off the highways and onto the rail lines, it's entirely appropriate for the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure to be the minister responsible for rail and to be the minister bringing forward this piece of legislation.

Now let's just think for a minute, Mr. Speaker. We have two, two ideas in front of us. One is the minister's speech which outlines what he thinks this Bill does and, number two, Mr. Speaker, is the Bill itself. And I want to argue that what the minister says is not what the Bill does. And as a result of that, Mr. Speaker, there are individuals and organizations and perhaps whole communities that will say we have to support this piece of legislation because of what the minister says, who don't know, Mr. Speaker, what the Bill actually does because the minister hasn't told them.

And I hope the members opposite, government members who are supportive of shortline rail in the province of Saskatchewan will pay very close attention to not only some of the things that I'm going to say but that my colleagues have said, Mr. Speaker, because if the only things that the government members know and understand is what the Minister of Highways has told them, then, Mr. Speaker, they don't understand fully what the legislation itself is going to do in the province of Saskatchewan.

So let's review for a minute, Mr. Speaker, what's in the minister's speech, the second reading speech. Before I do that, Mr. Speaker, for the people who are watching, a second reading speech is a debate in principle. When a Bill comes into this legislative Chamber at second reading, the debate is about the principle of the Bill. The Bill is then going to committee for clause by clause, and it comes back for debate. There isn't often debate at third reading, but third reading is debate that's specific to an amended Bill.

But, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about principle of the Bill. So this is an opportunity for the minister to outline exactly what's in front of us, give the people of Saskatchewan a full understanding of what it is that the government intends to do with this piece of legislation.

Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all the Minister of Highways says in his opening remarks, "... we are proposing to broaden the authority of the Grain Car commission to allow it to become more active in assisting the shortline railway industry in the province." Okay, Mr. Speaker, very simple comments. "We're going to broaden the authority . . . to provide more assistance to the shortline railway industry."

On the surface, Mr. Speaker, this sounds tremendous because the shortline industry in Saskatchewan has indeed faced a lot of challenges as it has developed. But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, that shortline industry is evolving with the growth of the province of Saskatchewan and continue to face, even as old challenges fall off, new challenges that present themselves.

We have one case that I'm also going to refer to in a few moments, Mr. Speaker, specifically that OmniTRAX-owned rail line, Meadow Lake to Speers in northwest Saskatchewan that I think we should review, Mr. Speaker, in the context of this piece of legislation. So the minister says we're going to assist the shortline rail industry in the province. Then he says, Mr. Speaker, the legislation is driven by responsibilities and

funding changes introduced in the budget released in March of this year.

What the minister's trying to do is tell us this is a budget Bill. It's really not anything else, Mr. Speaker. There was an increase in funding in the budget. That increase in funding needs some legislation backing and therefore, in order for that funding to go forward, we need legislation to do that.

Mr. Speaker, again if this legislation only dealt with the budgetary provision, the increase in funding, Mr. Speaker, then my speech would be very short and we'd proceed very quickly to committee on this Bill. But, Mr. Speaker, this Bill, as you'll see in a moment, does much more than deal with the financial commitment of increased funding.

And in fact, Mr. Speaker, I think a good argument could be made that this Bill doesn't address that budgetary matter at all, Mr. Speaker. That language does not appear in Bill 167. So it's difficult to understand how the minister can stand, explain the interpretation of the Bill by saying, we've got some extra funding; we need to move it forward through this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the minister also says that I directed . . . This is a quote: "I directed the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation to use its resources and expertise to look at new and innovative ways of providing assistance to the Saskatchewan shortline rail industry."

Mr. Speaker, the government seems to use the words new and innovative for everything that they're doing. Mr. Speaker, as some of my colleagues have indicated, and that I will also address in more formal remarks here shortly. Mr. Speaker, this Bill is far from new and innovative. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this Bill takes us back to the days where funding and financing was under the table. It wasn't transparent. It was not dealt with in the interests of communities or the public. It was dealt with in the interests of government and government friends, Mr. Speaker. In fact, this Bill is far from being new and innovative.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, the minister's remarks indicate that this Bill will ensure there is more product moving on rail; that means less wear and tear on provincial highways. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's the message that the public is getting about this Bill. This Bill will assist the shortline rail industry. This Bill will allow us to provide more funding for the shortline industry. This Bill provides new and innovative ways of support, and it will reduce wear and tear on our provincial highways.

[16:15]

Mr. Speaker, that's the message of the minister in this Chamber, expressing the intent of this legislation — nothing else. No reference whatsoever to anything else. If the members opposite in caucus or in cabinet, if the general public, if the media are to understand what's in this Bill and the only message they get is the message from the Minister of Highways introducing this Bill, Mr. Speaker, they don't understand the Bill. They haven't got the information that they need to understand what is in the Bill.

I'm going to come back to some of the specific comments, but in order to tie my remarks together, Mr. Speaker, with what the

minister said and what the Bill says, I need to first outline what is in the Bill, Mr. Speaker. And you tell me if it is anywhere near what the second reading intention speech was of the minister.

This Bill allows the corporation, the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation, to “acquire, by purchase, lease or otherwise, railway rolling stock suitable for the transportation of grain, commodities and other products.” So it allows the corporation to buy and lease stuff. It allows the corporation to “transfer, sell or . . . dispose of . . . rolling stock, plant, equipment or other assets acquired by the corporation.” It allows the corporation “the means by which grain, commodities or other products produced in Saskatchewan or elsewhere may be transported.”

And more importantly, Mr. Speaker, and this is the key phrase:

subject to any orders or directives of Treasury Board, [this Act allows the corporation to] provide financial assistance by way of grant, loan, guarantee or other similar means to persons for the purpose of allowing those persons to acquire railway rolling stock, plant, equipment or other assets that will benefit the railway industry.

Bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is this legislation provides the Saskatchewan rail car corporation the ability to acquire assets, to make loans, to sell rolling stock, to make decisions with regards to the transportation of commodities that might not even be rail oriented. And, Mr. Speaker, it allows for the expansion of the Grain Car Corporation to move other commodities, Mr. Speaker.

Now I can see why moving other commodities would be of some interest to the people of Saskatchewan because of course that’s one of the key components of shortline rail in northwest Saskatchewan, where we want to move more than just grain product off the highway onto the rail, from the Meadow Lake area, Mr. Speaker, down to the main CN [Canadian National] line in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker, something that can’t be done today. And, Mr. Speaker, which is causing no end of grief to the Highway 4 North, the highway that the government has just spent a tremendous amount of money on previously and currently, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that you’ve got a good, safe, high-quality road. It’s now being battered, Mr. Speaker, by a lot of truck traffic because the rail line is closed. But we’ll get back to that, Mr. Speaker, in a few minutes.

The central point of what I’m trying to get at, Mr. Speaker, is that the Minister of Highways presents the intention of this Bill in one way, a way in which it’s all flower and roses. We can all support the language that the minister has brought forward. The Bill on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, takes us back to the 1980s where loan guarantees transferred debt and liability to a hidden entity where decisions were being made by individuals other than the Legislative Assembly through the normal budget process, Mr. Speaker.

We’ve gone backwards with this legislation, not forward, and I don’t believe, Mr. Speaker, that those who have been supporting the legislation because they believe that it’s a shortline support legislation don’t fully understand this, Mr. Speaker, and we need to ensure that that information circulates

more broadly in the public.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard this language in this Chamber before. It wasn’t that long ago that the government brought forward legislation to change the way in which wildlife habitat lands were to be dealt with, Mr. Speaker. And this government, in their second reading speech, indicated that there was wide consultation amongst the groups that were important, Mr. Speaker, in regards to changes that the government wanted to propose.

Mr. Speaker, the minister at the time indicated the Wildlife Federation, Ducks Unlimited, the Nature Conservancy were all consulted and supportive of the legislation. Well, Mr. Speaker, it turned out after the organizations were contacted that in fact they’d been consulted on something other than the legislation, and in fact they were outraged at the legislation that was being brought forward as it stood, Mr. Speaker.

And in proof of that, subsequently we’ve now seen changes brought into this House, Mr. Speaker, to that piece of legislation because the Wildlife Federation, Ducks Unlimited, Nature Conservancy, and others came forward, were consulted, Mr. Speaker. It still isn’t good legislation, but, Mr. Speaker, it proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that what we in this Chamber were being told at second reading speech wasn’t actually what was happening out there in the real world.

Mr. Speaker, another example that supports my contention that the intention outlined by the government and what happens in the Bill are different, is on Bill 160, the legislation that will change the human rights tribunals — not just change the human rights tribunals, Mr. Speaker, but eliminate them altogether.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice stood in the House — he had people in the galleries, Mr. Speaker — and he said, we’ve consulted widely on this change. Mr. Speaker, we’ve got support from, and he named off a list of 17 or 18 organizations supporting the elimination of the human rights tribunals. Well, Mr. Speaker, it now turns out that the consultations that occurred were talking about all sorts of things but never the specifics of the Bill itself, Mr. Speaker.

We have uncovered — and anyone who wants to read our speeches on Bill 160 can do so, Mr. Speaker — but we’ve determined that in fact organizations were told one thing, the Bill said something completely different, and, Mr. Speaker, we’re now seeing individuals in very high places around North America and across the world becoming very critical of the intention that is specific to the language in Bill 160, Mr. Speaker.

And every day my colleague from Saskatoon Meewasin rises in this Chamber with petitions signed by people from all over Saskatchewan calling for the withdrawal of Bill 160 because, Mr. Speaker, the support that existed, existed because the minister had all these wonderful things to say about human rights commissions and tribunals, but it had absolutely nothing to do with the legislation. Just like the wildlife habitat protection lands, which were and are being stripped away from the people in Saskatchewan, the minister had indicated all these wonderful things that happen in the environment in support for landowners, etc., etc., Mr. Speaker. But it had nothing to do

with the actual intent of the legislation.

So here, Mr. Speaker, we have Bill 167 which the minister says, it's our way of supporting shortline railroads in the province of Saskatchewan, when in fact, Mr. Speaker, what it's supporting is the government's bent towards lack of transparency, lack of openness, lack of honesty, Mr. Speaker, lack of transparency in the process of government. We're finding . . . The government is finding numerous ways, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the public doesn't know what's going on and, more importantly, that the government provides opportunities to financially reward its friends and supporters in ways that the public won't fully, will never accept, Mr. Speaker, if they had all of the information.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues who spoke before me outlined some very good examples of what's been happening in this regard just in the last few months, Mr. Speaker, where we have seen the government talking about new and innovative ways of doing things, but have simply been reverting back to ways of the 1980s. We're told by the government opposite, Mr. Speaker, that the '80s are in the past. You know, we've learned from the '80s. We're a better government now because of the '80s, Mr. Speaker.

But there are a lot of people in Saskatchewan who haven't forgotten the massive debt that was left after the two terms of government led by Premier Grant Devine, Mr. Speaker, a massive debt that took this province years to get back under control, Mr. Speaker, years of sacrifice by municipalities and people living in Saskatchewan all over the place. Mr. Speaker, this legislation has started this process again to take us back to those days.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's quite a bit that my colleagues have said about that during their remarks. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I am extraordinarily proud of my colleagues, members from Saskatoon and Regina — urban constituencies, Mr. Speaker — who have made some very passionate speeches about agriculture in Saskatchewan, about rail line development and activity in Saskatchewan, about the relationship between the economy and rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Very passionate, intelligent, and, Mr. Speaker, compelling speeches from my colleagues from urban ridings in Saskatchewan demonstrating, Mr. Speaker, that my colleagues fully understand the value that rural Saskatchewan has provided to the entire nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker. They've demonstrated in their comments on Bill 167, Mr. Speaker, they've demonstrated an understanding of this history.

I can outline in fact my memories at the kitchen table in my house when I was in high school, Mr. Speaker. My grandfathers both farmed the land, Mr. Speaker. My grandfathers were actively engaged in their community. My grandfathers were very much a part of building the agricultural and community history that we now benefit from, Mr. Speaker. A lot of the talk around the kitchen table, as it was for a lot of members in this House, Mr. Speaker, a lot of that talk around the kitchen table was about the rail lines and how, how mistreated the Saskatchewan farm community was by CP [Canadian Pacific] and CN. Mostly, Mr. Speaker, CP got most of the brunt of those comments. And I think we all remember some of those famous sayings about CP rail that circulated in our communities, Mr.

Speaker.

But the rail lines forced people in Saskatchewan to do things collectively, communally, Mr. Speaker, in ways in which have created a whole different way of looking at the economy of our province. And we're the beneficiaries today as a result of that. We know, Mr. Speaker, that farm communities banded together to ensure that we had support for things like the Crow rate and later the Crow benefit, as Ottawa governments tried to pull that away from us, Mr. Speaker.

And I might mention, Mr. Speaker, that the result of the loss of the Crow and the Crow benefit, Mr. Speaker, has cost Saskatchewan producers hundreds of millions of dollars since the loss of that benefit — a benefit, Mr. Speaker, that the rail lines argued away. Nobody gave it away, Mr. Speaker, but the rail lines argued it away because they said we can't make enough money off of agriculture to move the product to port to sell it. We in Saskatchewan know better than anyone, better than anyone that our product is further from point of sale than any other agriculture product in the world, Mr. Speaker. We have to move our product from point of growth, Mr. Speaker, to point of delivery and sale — tremendous distances, Mr. Speaker.

So we rely heavily on rail to do that. It's the most economical way of moving product. We also know that at the time that the rail lines were moving away from providing farmers with the benefit of moving grain, and there was an understanding of course that why the Crow Rate and the Crow Benefit existed was so that all of Canada would share in that transportation cost.

And I was involved in that debate, Mr. Speaker, back in the early 1980s in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. I was involved in that debate, and part of that argument was very simple. If I am buying a car from Detroit, I'm paying the freight on that car from Detroit to Saskatchewan. But if someone in Indonesia is buying grain, I, as the producer of that grain, am paying the freight to get it to Indonesia. What's the big deal here, Mr. Speaker?

[16:30]

So part of the Crow rate and part of the Crow benefit was to share that cost out across all of Canadians, Mr. Speaker, because everyone benefitted by the sale of our agriculture product on the international market. Farmers, agriculture producers, Mr. Speaker, developed all sort of systems collectively and co-operatively because the private sector, whether it be the elevator companies or the rail lines, were working against them, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Wheat Board was developed in response to elevator companies taking advantage of producers.

And now, Mr. Speaker, we're in a federal election campaign in which Saskatchewan producers should be talking daily about the Canadian Wheat Board. We have a Minister of Agriculture — my own Member of Parliament, Mr. Speaker — Minister of Agriculture who is campaigning, not in this election but outside of the election parameters, Mr. Speaker, to get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board. Well, Mr. Speaker, if producers who support shortline railways understood what the Minister of

Agriculture was doing to get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board, I think there would be a broader debate in our communities, Mr. Speaker.

Shortline railways to a certain extent depend on the Canadian Wheat Board, Mr. Speaker, because it's the Canadian Wheat Board that assures the external and export markets that we're moving grain on rail primarily for. If everyone wants to sell grain to a domestic or a nearby market and doesn't require rail cars to do that, Mr. Speaker, we'll truck all our grain. We don't need shortline railways, we don't need the national railway, that's all we need. But, Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to export large quantities of our agriculture product — grains in particular, Mr. Speaker — and the Canadian Wheat Board assures those sales and assures a sale, Mr. Speaker, that provides the necessary return for Saskatchewan producers.

So when we're talking about supporting the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation and supporting the needs of the local communities in the fight, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we can keep those rail lines growing, operating, Mr. Speaker, then we also need to be fighting that fight to support and save the Canadian Wheat Board. But that wasn't my intention, Mr. Speaker, to get into that secondary argument.

What we've got in front of us, Mr. Speaker, is a government whose intention is twofold. There's a public intention to show support for producers for the rail industry, and in fact, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing some additional funding being made available. We've got a Bill that doesn't discuss additional funding. We have a Bill that discusses the secondary intention of this government, Mr. Speaker, which is providing the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation the ability to make loan guarantees.

Now, Mr. Speaker, sometimes loan guarantees are beneficial in our communities. And if they're done in a transparent way, if they're done with information that's available to the public, if it's done based on a policy that's had open debate in this Chamber through the media in the public, Mr. Speaker, then you know you've got an understanding of what's going on.

But this Act simply gives the corporation the ability to make loan guarantees to grain car corporations, shortline rail. Mr. Speaker, some of those shortlines are community owned. They're looking for financial support and the ability to borrow money, and I have no objection whatsoever to supporting community organizations who want to find some way to grow. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that there is a role for the provincial government to support and help.

But there are also private corporations like OmniTRAX, Mr. Speaker, who are running shortline rail, who have completely abused the privilege that they've been granted to operate on a rail bed in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we are now seeing a highway, people's lives being put at risk because that rail line is no longer operating. And, Mr. Speaker, that is not the sort of thing that we should be giving the Grain Car Corporation the power and the privilege to negotiate with and to provide loan guarantees.

Now, Mr. Speaker, granted the Act says "subject to any orders or directives of Treasury Board, provide financial assistance

. . ." I say granted, Mr. Speaker, because there's a process after the Grain Car Corporation does its deals and then brings forward whatever recommendations that it has.

But I went to the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation website, Mr. Speaker, and I took a look at some of the things that are listed there. The first thing that came to my attention, Mr. Speaker, is the board of directors of the Grain Car Corporation. Remember this Act introduced by the Minister of Highways that gives the Grain Car Corporation, essentially the board of directors, the right to make loan guarantees? So who are the board of directors? Who are the members of the board of directors, Mr. Speaker, that are being given the right by legislative authority to make loan guarantees to virtually anybody in the industry? The board of directors of the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation is the Minister of Highways and the Minister of Agriculture. That's it. That's what's listed, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Highways and the Minister of Agriculture.

This legislation has just put the power of loan guarantees in the hands of two cabinet ministers, Mr. Speaker. Did the minister mention this in his remarks? Did the minister mention this in caucus or at cabinet? Did the minister mention this to the media when he introduced the legislation, Mr. Speaker? There are people in Saskatchewan who support railcars — myself included, Mr. Speaker — who find this premise unacceptable.

We want to support the government's intention to support the shortline rail industry, but how do we do that, Mr. Speaker, when we know that we're setting up a system whereby loan guarantees can be made between two ministers sitting side by side in the Chamber with no public consideration. It is certainly an interesting point I think, Mr. Speaker, that people have to consider when they're thinking about what it is that we're doing.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, what's the current, what's the current mandate for the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation? Well first the vision of the Grain Car Corporation is to have an effective, efficient, and affordable grain handling and rail transportation system that's the best in the world. Can't disagree with that, Mr. Speaker; I've supported that for some time. Vision: effective, efficient, affordable grain handling rail transportation system.

What does this Bill do, Mr. Speaker? This Bill . . . The very first change, the corporation may "acquire, by purchase, lease or otherwise, railway rolling stock suitable for the transportation of grain, commodities and other products," Mr. Speaker. Also powers of the corporation, 12(f) "provide the means by which grain, commodities or other products produced in Saskatchewan or elsewhere may be transported." And, Mr. Speaker, finally, "(h) do any . . . thing that the corporation considers necessary, incidental or conducive to meeting its objects and purposes or to exercising its powers."

Mr. Speaker, this very short Act that changes the powers of the corporation, that's what this Act does. I didn't say that at the beginning of my remarks. It changes the powers of the corporation, Mr. Speaker, seems to have ignored the vision statement of the corporation itself, which is "grain handling and rail transportation system," Mr. Speaker, to be a transportation

system that could include forestry products, mining products. I'm not saying that's bad, Mr. Speaker, but that's not what the government's been telling us in the speeches that have been made so far.

Also, Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at the mandate of the corporation as it exists today. Again no change in the legislation with regards to mandate or the preamble of the Bill, Mr. Speaker, but the mandate on the corporate strategy is quite simple: "In partnership with farmers, and community groups, and in cooperation with shippers and railroads enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of transporting and handling grain." So, Mr. Speaker, the key phrases there, of the mandate, is partnership with farmers and community groups and secondarily, co-operation with shippers and railroads.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this Bill certainly takes us further than co-operating with the railroads. Mr. Speaker, this legislation would actually allow the corporation to partner with corporations, shippers, and private sector operators, not just communities and farmers, Mr. Speaker.

The whole idea of the Grain Car Corporation at the beginning of time, Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of its time, was to build into that co-operative nature of Saskatchewan agriculture and communities; that co-operative nature that was part of the Crow rate and the Crow benefit, the development of the Canadian Wheat Board, Mr. Speaker, and so many other things that are important to us. Mr. Speaker. It was built around the transportation of grain.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if the government intends that they want to shift the direction of the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation to a transportation agency for all commodities, they should tell us that. They should tell us that. The minister's speech talked about how important shortline railways are to farmers in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, but the Bill is substantially changing the nature in which the corporation, the commission, functions. Mr. Speaker, if the government wants to do that, they should have the courage to say so. But the minister's second reading speech ignored that entirely.

Let's just jump back here. We take a look at what the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation says about its own history. I just quote one statement here:

In the early 1970's Canada lost major international grain sales because the country's grain car fleet was obsolete and did not have the capacity to get grain products to export position. As a result of this situation, the Government's of Canada, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Canadian Wheat Board began to purchase hopper cars for use in its grain handling and transportation system in Western Canada.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I've mentioned to you before my grandfather sitting around the kitchen table, having coffee and complaining about the rail lines, Mr. Speaker. The rail lines, the major rail lines totally failed the producers of Canada. Saskatchewan and Alberta governments, having no control whatsoever over a national rail line policy, decided the only things that they could do to help farmers in Saskatchewan and Alberta was to invest in hopper cars themselves. The rail lines

weren't prepared to do it. The rail lines were not putting any new money into the system whatsoever.

And in fact later, after the cars are bought and painted and put into work, Mr. Speaker, the rail lines started to drop its rail line rehabilitation program, Mr. Speaker. And shortly thereafter the federal government dropped its rail line rehabilitation program. And as a result we had railbeds all over Western Canada torn up, Mr. Speaker, and more and more product put on trucks.

And as a result of that, our highways got beat up. The rail lines were happy because they didn't have to maintain so much line. They used our highways as branch lines, Mr. Speaker, to get the product from the farmer's gate to the point of shipping, a major shipping point, Mr. Speaker, and the provincial taxpayer had to pick up the tab, Mr. Speaker, had to pick up the tab for rebuilding roads, for maintaining roads, Mr. Speaker, and we're still doing that today.

And in fact the Minister of Highways indicated how supportive he is of this legislation because it should take truck traffic off our highways and roads. Well, Mr. Speaker, I hope he's correct because that's indeed what needs to be done.

[16:45]

But getting back to my comments earlier, the rail lines completely abandoned the Saskatchewan and Alberta, the Prairie grain farmers, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan government, Alberta government, the Canadian Wheat Board, Mr. Speaker, made investments to support farmers throughout Western Canada and, Mr. Speaker, they did a very good job of it. More importantly, Saskatchewan created the Grain Car Corporation which, by its annual reports, indicates it has been very successful. It has done the job that it was meant to do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge that things have to change. As the economy changes, as our technology changes, as our practices change, there is an evolution, Mr. Speaker, and change occurs to ensure that you keep up. But, Mr. Speaker, in order to keep up, we have to be very honest and open with the Saskatchewan people so they know what government is doing on their behalf. Government doesn't exist, Mr. Speaker, to do what government wants. Government exists to meet the needs, the wishes of the people within the jurisdiction for which that government is responsible.

And, Mr. Speaker, our responsibility is to farm families, to agriculture producers, to communities, Mr. Speaker, some of those communities who are heavily engaged in operating and managing shortline railways. Mr. Speaker, we have to do everything that we can as a government to ensure that those communities have the tools necessary to get the job done.

That's why I'm not surprised whatsoever when the Minister of Highways reads into the record for almost half of the time he was on his feet, reads letters from agricultural organizations supporting shortline railways in Saskatchewan. I expect nothing less from those who represent people and communities in farm country in our province, Mr. Speaker. I expect the farm organizations and the representatives of farm people in our province, Mr. Speaker, to speak very highly of and support shortline railways, Mr. Speaker. But I don't think those

organizations believe that we should be going back to the 1980s and ensuring that we have a government that allows individuals, board of directors, to reach agreements for loan guarantees that are hidden from the Saskatchewan public.

Those organizations are upset already, Mr. Speaker, at the government's efforts with regards to the loan guarantees offered to Amicus, the long-term care, private long-term care facility that's being built in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, a loan guarantee, Mr. Speaker, that essentially puts Saskatchewan taxpayers' money at risk when long-term care organizations in communities across this province are not getting similar treatment, Mr. Speaker.

We've also seen this government announce 200, \$230 million worth of loan guarantees for the federal Immigrant Investor Fund, Mr. Speaker, because that Immigrant Investor Fund is expected to provide loans to improve affordable housing in Saskatchewan. I say affordable because that's the government's word, but I think we all understand, Mr. Speaker, that the housing that the government has announced they expect to be built is not considered affordable in the majority of communities in the province of Saskatchewan.

The same organizations and individuals, Mr. Speaker, are also upset at this deal with regards to the Hill tower in Regina, essentially a 20-year agreement that provides a loan guarantee for Harvard Development, Mr. Speaker, a corporate entity, Mr. Speaker, that at the end of the day ensures that the funding, the liability of government, is hidden, Mr. Speaker, in a lease arrangement. And, Mr. Speaker, we've also got the circumstances where the government has been less than transparent with the Carlton Trail, St. Peter's College circumstance that existed.

So what we've got here, Mr. Speaker, is a piece of legislation that is ensuring that all those things will continue not just within government but within the Grain Car Corporation, something that nobody in rural Saskatchewan really thinks is appropriate.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the work that the Grain Car Corporation has done to date. I'm taking a look at the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation, it's called Quick Facts as of July 31st, 2010: total dividends paid to the General Revenue Fund from the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation — \$15 million.

So not only is the Grain Car Corporation saving individual farmers money, Mr. Speaker, it's also providing funds to the General Revenue Fund that allows the government to increase spending on other matters such as education, health care and, Mr. Speaker, highways.

The unfortunate thing is, on the one hand if you've got the rail lines using the highways as branch lines and breaking them up, you're not really ahead of the game if you have to use the funding from the grain corporation to fix the highways. So we have to be doing something about that.

Mr. Speaker, we've also seen significant increases in volumes. The Grain Car Corporation corporate report says that in 2009-10 crop year, Saskatchewan saw overall grain volumes moved in Grain Car Corporation hopper cars increase from the

'08-09 year; 1 260 891 tonnes of grains are estimated to have been hauled in Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation hopper cars in '09-10, as compared to 1 010 880 tonnes in the previous year, equating to a year-over-year increase of about 24.7 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, this is a testament to the work that's been done in our farm communities, and a testament to the work that's done by a Grain Car Corporation that's doing what, Mr. Speaker? It is managing a fleet that once was 1,000 hopper cars and now is 900-and-some hopper cars, Mr. Speaker, because over the 30 years of the corporation, a number of cars have been damaged or withdrawn from the fleet.

The new Bill of course allows the corporation to sell those cars if it wants to, Mr. Speaker. So it goes from actually being a corporation that manages those cars in the interests of the farmers to a corporation that actually may not have any assets at all at the end of its, at the end of its full mandate because it has the power to sell those cars. And what we might be left with is simply debt, similar to what the government in 1991 was left with after the operation of the Grain Car Corporation during the 1980s where it ran up a significant debt. And actually the Government of Saskatchewan, through its General Revenue Fund, had to bail out the Grain Car Corporation \$32 million worth in 1991, Mr. Speaker.

Quite a number of things have happened in support of shortline railways over the year. I also was able to find a number of ways in the past that government has supported the communities, Mr. Speaker. The Grain Car Corporation has found ways without going into significant debt.

I have a news release here dated July 31st, 2001, in which the West Central Road and Rail was provided with a \$400,000 investment towards the work that they were doing. The corporate report of last year indicates that West Central Road and Rail today has seen loading facilities constructed at Eston, Laporte, Lucky Lake, and Beechy, and they estimate that this has increased producer returns an average of 10 to \$20 per tonne, depending on the blending opportunities that were available during the various crop years. Mr. Speaker, so in 2001 government was supporting the shortline rail system.

In 2002 we have another news release here that says, "The Saskatchewan government provides the Farmer Rail Car Coalition \$450,000 in funding and in-kind technical support to develop a business plan, including financing, to buy federal government hopper cars." Mr. Speaker, this also has been a successful initiative.

Those were all done while New Democrats were in government, Mr. Speaker. But for some credit, in November of last year, 2010, the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation under the new Sask Party government gave priority to leasing its hopper cars to Saskatchewan shortline railways. Mr. Speaker, we have found ways over the years to be innovative in the way in which we address our shortline rail operators, particularly the community rail line operators, Mr. Speaker.

In the words of the Minister of Health from previous debates, there's more work to do, Mr. Speaker. There's more work to do. But this legislation, Bill 167, does not do what the government

says they want to do, and it will not necessarily — that's what the debate is all about — will not necessarily, Mr. Speaker, achieve the goals that it says it wishes to achieve. That having been said, Mr. Speaker, I think that it is important that this piece of legislation go to committee so that questions can be asked, Mr. Speaker. And we in the opposition today are prepared to send this legislation to committee so that we can ask the appropriate questions, some of which I've outlined in my comments, some of which my colleagues have outlined in their comments.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I will take my seat and indicate to yourself and the government that we are prepared now to send this Bill to committee.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Minister of Highways that Bill No. 167, *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Amendment Act, 2011* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill stand referred? I recognize the Government Deputy House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Standing Committee on the Economy.

The Speaker: — The Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy. I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Mr. Speaker, it being very near the time of adjournment, I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — The Deputy Government House Leader has moved that this House do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:59.]

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