



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

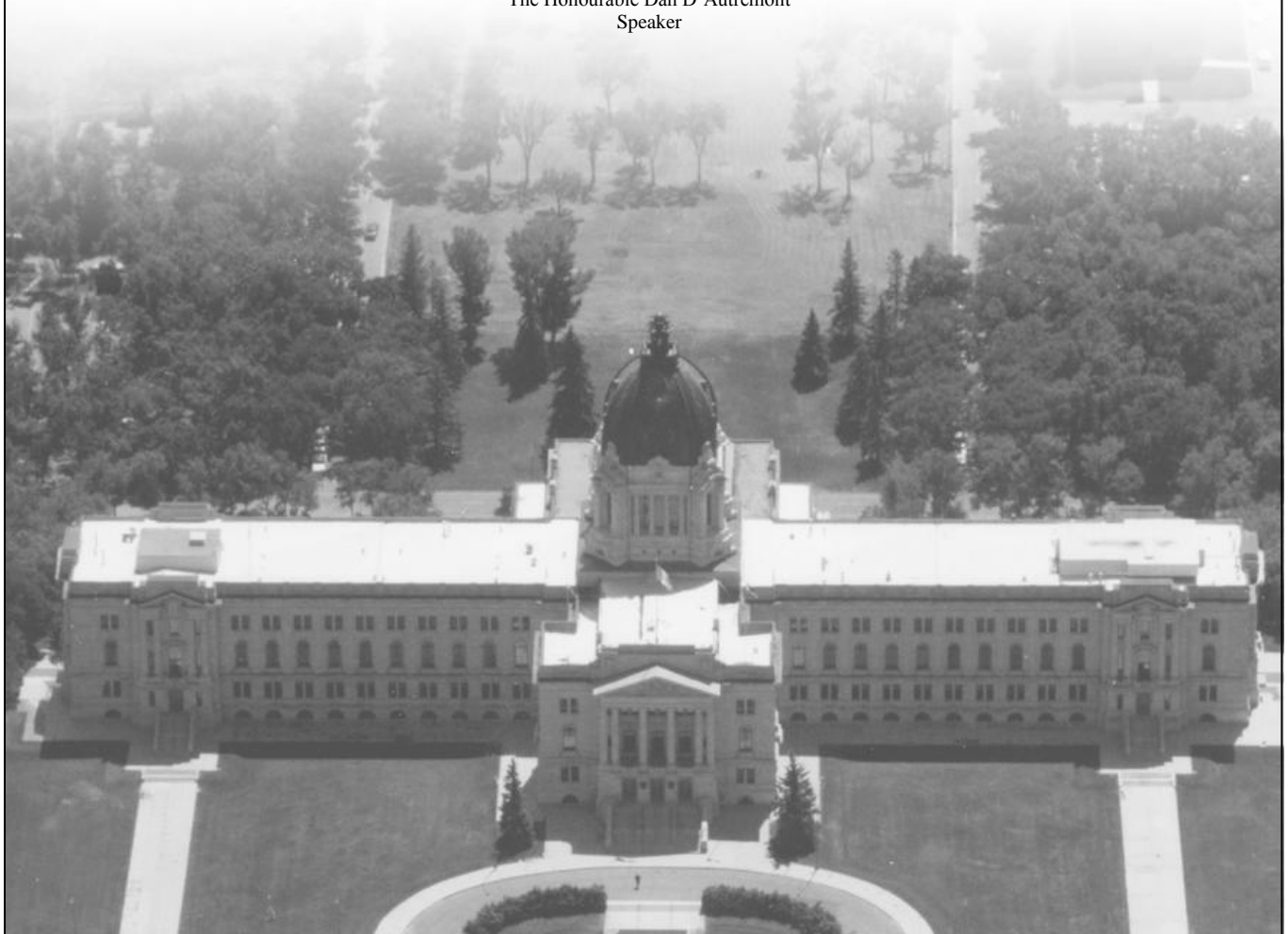
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Dan D'Autremont
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — John Nilson

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
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
Broten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Campeau, Jennifer	SP	Saskatoon Fairview
Chartier, Danielle	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Cox, Herb	SP	The Battlefords
D'Autremont, Hon. Dan	SP	Cannington
Docherty, Mark	SP	Regina Coronation Park
Doherty, Kevin	SP	Regina Northeast
Doke, Larry	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Hon. Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Hon. Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harrison, Hon. Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Hon. Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, Hon. D.F. (Yogi)	SP	Wood River
Jurgens, Victoria	SP	Prince Albert Northcote
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lawrence, Greg	SP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Hon. Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Makowsky, Gene	SP	Regina Dewdney
Marchuk, Russ	SP	Regina Douglas Park
Merriman, Paul	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Moe, Scott	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Parent, Roger	SP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Phillips, Kevin	SP	Melfort
Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Hon. Laura	SP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Sproule, Cathy	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Steinley, Warren	SP	Regina Walsh Acres
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Tell, Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Tochor, Corey	SP	Saskatoon Eastview
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, from Regina Coronation Park, grade 7 and 8 students from Gladys McDonald School. And in particular I'd also like to introduce the teachers and guests that are accompanying them.

The teacher is Nicole Blondeau — you just give us a wave. Thank you. Gail Kelln is a chaperone, Derek Finnick, Dale Flavel, Lori Kotylak, Ms. Kohli and Ms. Brown. Had an opportunity to say hi earlier and we're to go and have a . . . We're going to have an opportunity to talk later, Mr. Speaker. But I'd really like to have the rest of the Assembly join me in welcoming Gladys McDonald School and thank you through . . . This is your Assembly. This is your legislature. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I have another announcement. To you and through you, I'd like to welcome Street Culture Kidz Project Inc. It's an organization that I've been involved in for many years. And in particular, I'd like to introduce just some of the names on the list: Kim Sutherland, Torrin Leigh-Spencer, Mark Hess, Brenda Hosking, Lester Shepherd, Jordan Roseberry, Jason Cowan, Daven Dorma, Kadir Warsame, Todd Galloway, Mottika Red Star, Dennis Mazur, and Devon Floyd. And thank you so much for being here.

They've got a number of initiatives, and they're working with front-line, street-entrenched youth for many, many years now, and a number of housing initiatives that are certainly giving out some really positive outcomes. And I'd like to have the Assembly welcome and thank them for their participation in our community.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join with the member opposite in introducing to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, certainly, Kim and the group from Street Culture. Now I know that Street Culture's got a shelter called Doc's house, but don't get any ideas about the legislature here. So it's good to tell the one joke that only one person up there understands and perhaps somebody over there, Mr. Speaker.

But anyway it's good to see Kim Sutherland and the group from Street Culture here today. I join with the member from Regina Coronation Park in welcoming them.

It's also good to see in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, former member for Last Mountain-Touchwood, former Deputy

Speaker in this Chamber, Dale Flavel, accompanying the group from Gladys McDonald. Please welcome him back to his Legislative Assembly, and all the guests as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Yorkton.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all the members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce to you a group of 32 grade 12 students from Yorkton Regional High School. Their teacher, Mr. Perry Ostapowich, accompanies them along with Mr. Scott Wallis and interns Janelle Gervais and Sebastian Prost. We had opportunity to take a picture on the grand staircase and meet prior to the Assembly. And I'd just ask all members to welcome this great group to their Assembly.

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, one more introduction. In your gallery, in the upper part of the gallery, mayor of Yorkton, Mr. James Wilson, one of the best mayors I think we've had in many, many years and also a very good friend. I'd ask all members to welcome Mayor Wilson to his Assembly.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join in with the member from Yorkton in welcoming the mayor of Yorkton, James Wilson, to this House. We know he's a very good leader in the city of Yorkton, and we welcome him here to his legislature. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour to introduce to you and through you to members of the House members of the accomplished team of Regina Rams who were honoured in Vancouver at the Vanier Cup award presentations. Mr. Speaker, I had a chance to join members of the University of Saskatchewan Huskies and the Rams as they received their awards in Vancouver.

In the gallery this afternoon, Mr. Speaker — and I'd ask them to just give a wave when I mention their name — we have Chris Bodnar. Chris is the first team all-Canadian punter with an average of 44.6 yards. Stefan Charles. Stefan received an award for the first team all-Canadian defensive tackle.

Akiem Hicks is here. Akiem was presented with the first team all-Canadian defensive end award. He was also the Canada West nominee for the J.P. Metras Trophy presented to the CIS [Canadian Interuniversity Sport] outstanding lineman. The Rams just found out today, Mr. Speaker, that Akiem was asked to play in the East-West Shrine Bowl in St. Petersburg, Florida. We'll all be cheering you on, Akiem.

Brett Jones, Mr. Speaker, was awarded the first team all-Canadian offensive guard and was the Canada West nominee for the Russ Jackson Award presented to the CIS student athlete who best exemplifies the attributes of academic achievement, football skill, and citizenship. Brett was also the academic all-Canadian during his first two years in the Faculty

of Engineering and Applied Science.

Lastly, but not least, Mr. Speaker, joining them we have Rams' defensive coordinator, Paul Dawson, who does an outstanding job mentoring these fine student athletes.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the legislature to honour these outstanding student athletes and their coach in their legislature this afternoon. Thank you.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I know I'm not supposed to include the Speaker in my welcome, but we very much welcome the University of Regina Rams team members and coaches here because both the Speaker, last year and years before that, had a son who was a U of R [University of Regina] Cougar, and I think you all know my daughter, Solveig Nilson, who is a U of R Cougar volleyball player.

So the importance of being student athletes in our universities is a very crucial thing and I congratulate those of you who are able to get to that level of care.

But I think the really positive thing for Regina, for the university, and for you as athletes who we're proud of in our community is this long-term relationship the Rams has been able to build now for 12 years as the University of Regina team, and that builds on many, many decades of Rams football in Regina. And you all are people that we can be proud of. And I'd have to say to Chris Bodnar, I always thought I'd be watching you playing basketball, not football, but it's still nice to see you playing football because, Chris, you were a very good basketball player as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say congratulations on your honours, and we look forward to seeing you all working together next year with your fully recovered star quarterback, Marc Mueller.

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I want to also say greetings to the mayor of Yorkton and also to Kim Sutherland who is one of my constituents in Regina Lakeview. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the members of this Assembly, I'd like to introduce a gentleman from my area and in fact a good friend of mine — and don't hold it against him, but he was my first campaign manager a few seasons ago — Mr. Ken Burton. Mr. Ken Burton has joined us today. He's newly a member of the C & D [conservation and development] organization in the RM [rural municipality] of Kingsley, and I'd like the members to extend a warm welcome to Mr. Burton.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have some guests to introduce, seated in your gallery this afternoon as well.

And just before I do, may I just offer the comment that it must be Christmas because it's a season that brings people together.

And moments ago, we just had a former U of S [University of Saskatchewan] Huskie offensive lineman introduce a group of Rams in the gallery. And I want to welcome them as well and congratulate them on their individual achievements in the CIS and for the Rams football team.

Mr. Speaker, also on a sports note, in your gallery are two of, well the finest sports broadcasters in the WHL [Western Hockey League]. One is now retired, and I'm happy to report is helping me out in my job and has been doing that for a while. He used to do colour for the Broncos through a lot of the '90s. His name is Everett Hindley. Members of this House will know him. Some have cut ads about him.

But seated with him from Kelowna, seated with him from Kelowna is the voice of the Kelowna Rockets. He formerly was the voice, the play-by-play voice of the Swift Current Broncos, and his family was well known in Swift Current. Now they have relocated to Kelowna as well. But they're together again, Mr. Speaker, and I just want to welcome Regan especially back to the province. I think the Rockets and the Pats get together later tonight and we want to say to Regan, welcome home and welcome to this Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce the Acting Chief Electoral Officer, Dave Wilkie, who is seated up in the Speaker's gallery. I ask all the members to welcome him to his Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of trappers of Saskatchewan. The current regulations being enforced are creating challenges that create concerns for our traditional trappers. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to recognize that the experience gained through practical experience be valued, and in so doing to cause the government to review the current legislation, regulations with respect to trapping regulations and firearm use in consultation with traditional resource users.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

It is signed by many trappers of northern Saskatchewan. I so present.

The Speaker: — Oral statements. Excuse me, members' statements. You may do them orally.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Carrot River Valley.

Hudson Bay Riders Win Football Championship

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, Carrot River Valley is well known as the football capital of Saskatchewan. Now, Mr.

Speaker, I have stood in this Chamber many a time bragging about the Carrot River Wildcats, but this time, Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about the Hudson Bay Riders.

Mr. Speaker, Saturday, November the 12th, the Hudson Bay Riders won a provincial 2A six-man final in a nail-biting 62-20 win over the Rosthern Longhorns. I give my condolences to the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook. I notice he's hanging his head a bit. But, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to football and the opposing teams that have come to northeast Saskatchewan, the outcome is usually predictable. I do want to congratulate the Rosthern Longhorns for a great season though.

Mr. Speaker, the Hudson Bay Riders had a perfect 12 and zero season. Unfortunately the weather for the final was not as perfect as the Riders' season was, and we had about 4 inches of snow. And although the field was cleaned, it was very slippery — not exactly perfect playing conditions. However the good people of Carrot River Valley are known to stare down adversity. By halftime the Riders had built up a 25-point lead and never looked back.

Mr. Speaker, I would like this Assembly to join me in congratulating the Hudson Bay Riders and coaches Gene Hauta, Ricky Anderson, Bradon Messer, and Trevor Wasilow on a super season. Thank you.

[13:45]

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

Saskatonian Honoured for Acts of Service

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Corporal Matthew Hrycuik was awarded the Gold Life-Saving Award on Thursday, November 15th at Hugh Cairns Armouries in Saskatoon for saving two pilots from the twin-engine plane crash on April 1st, 2011.

Corporal Hrycuik was nominated for the most prestigious honour given by the St. John Ambulance by its former president, Don McDonald, who said, "It shows what they're able to do, and a young guy like that needs to be recognized."

The corporal describes his initial response to the accident by saying:

Corporal Rachel Brower and I were heading southbound on Wanuskewin Road when we observed the plane dropping at an alarming speed. When we came upon the crash site, I started running towards the plane as Rachel dialled 911. While approaching the wreckage, I did a brief scene assessment. With exposed fuel lines split and expelling fuel, it was a life over limb situation.

Well, Mr. Speaker, three years ago in Afghanistan, Corporal Hrycuik was recognized for outstanding service as well. The corporal provided life-saving first aid for over two hours until a medical evacuation was completed. The commander's commendation reads, and I quote:

His professional action within the early days of the rotation saved the lives of Afghan soldiers and enabled the

rapid establishment of trust and respect between the Canadian team and the Afghan National Army.

I ask all members in joining me to congratulate Corporal Hrycuik for his outstanding service to our community and our country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Batoche.

Middle Lake Hosts and Wins Cross-Country Championship

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, October 15th, my hometown of Middle Lake came together to host its first ever provincial cross-country championship. The cross-country meet was held at the beautiful Lucien Lake Regional Park, which is situated beside the village of Middle Lake.

Middle Lake was able to accomplish this feat with the help of over 115 dedicated volunteers from surrounding communities. Hosting approximately 600 runners, plus spectators and coaches and attendants, Middle Lake put on a show to be proud of.

Thirteen runners from Middle Lake competed in the six races held throughout the day, with one goal in mind — winning the 1A school championship for the fourth consecutive year. At the end of the day, our runners were successful in their quest, capturing their fourth consecutive Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association 1A provincial cross-country championship.

I would like to recognize the hard work and dedication of all event volunteers, with a special mention going to Trevor Otsig, the coach of Middle Lake Avengers as well as the main organizer of this provincial championship. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating the Middle Lake Avengers on winning this prestigious fourth consecutive provincial title. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

First Nations and Métis Education Gap

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Education is vital to our province's future. If we're going to build a truly prosperous province for the long term in which everyone has a chance to get ahead, achieve their full potential, and realize their aspirations, we need to get it right when it comes to education.

This is true for all Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, but is especially true for our First Nations and Métis people. Last month economist Eric Howe released a report in which he said this: "Bridging the Aboriginal education gap is the most significant economic challenge confronting Saskatchewan. It is also our greatest economic opportunity."

According to Howe's report, the social benefit of closing the education gap for First Nations and Métis people is \$90 billion, and the economic benefit of closing the education gap amounts to 20 per cent more than all sales of potash in the history of Saskatchewan. This is not only a huge challenge for our

province, but it is a huge opportunity.

Unfortunately the Sask Party government's track record on the issue of Aboriginal employment and education is weak, most especially due to their cancellation of the Aboriginal employment development program. And just last year under the federal Conservative government, over 1,000 First Nations people in our province were turned down for funding from the post-secondary student support program. We can no longer afford such short-sighted and irresponsible decisions from the provincial and federal governments. We need serious action to close the First Nations and Métis education gap in our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for The Battlefords.

North Battleford Educator Honoured

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in this House today to recognize the accomplishments of a long-time resident and an educator in North Battleford — that's Mr. Roy Challis.

Roy was recently honoured at the 2011 fall Saskatchewan School Boards Association general assembly. He was presented with two prestigious awards: a life membership and also the Award of Distinction. The Award of Distinction in particular honours school board members who demonstrate outstanding service to public education in Saskatchewan.

Roy has been involved in education in one form or another all of his life, both as a teacher who supported all of his children in reaching their full potential and as a board member for the Living Sky School Division for 14 years. In 2004 Roy was elected to the Saskatchewan School Boards Association executive as the urban public representative, and in 2006 he was elected president, a position which he held for three years.

Mr. Challis is also well known for his involvement in local arts and drama productions, often acting, writing, directing, and producing local plays that have brought countless hours of pleasure to the residents of The Battlefords.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members to join me, along with the residents of The Battlefords, in congratulating Mr. Roy Challis on receiving this much deserved recognition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saskatoon Ambulance Service Marks 35th Year

Ms. Campeau: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 2011 marks the 35th year of MD Ambulance providing exceptional service to the people of Saskatchewan. They are a key part of our health care system's efforts to put our patients first. Every day they make a difference in the lives of patients and their families by providing timely, high-quality emergency medical services.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that their excellence be acknowledged, especially in such a challenging field. They

deserve recognition and our gratitude for making sure that, every day, people in need receive responsible professional care. MD Ambulance is one of the premier EMS [emergency medical services] providers in the country. Their partnership with Saskatchewan air ambulance and role in securing a new mobile health bus for the Saskatoon Health Region are just two examples of how they have gone beyond what's expected to help patients.

Our government is open to using new approaches to improving the patient care experience and efficiency in the health care system. Mr. Speaker, it is the patients that benefit the most from increased efficiency, and that's something we all want — better care for patients. We will be counting heavily on innovative, progressive partners like MD Ambulance as we plan the future of mobile health services in Saskatchewan.

Congratulations to MD Ambulance on another great year and on 35 years of exceptional service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

RxFiles Application Developed in Saskatoon

Mr. Parent: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate a team of pharmacists in Saskatoon who developed an iPad . . . an iPhone application which is now available for purchase on Apple's App Store. The application is called RxFiles. It is a database of prescription drug comparison information for health professionals.

Mr. Speaker, the RxFiles app [application] contains more than 85 charts and 2,000 entries of comparisons. It provides practical information on advantages, disadvantages, selection, and usage considerations on each drug. This information helps health professionals make sound decisions in the best interest of the patient and their care.

This application is part of a larger RxFiles initiative. The initiative is a not-for-profit service which receives funding from the sale of drug information resources and a grant from the Ministry of Health. This larger service provides academic detailing, a form of education outreach for physicians and health professionals in the province.

Mr. Speaker, RxFiles is a well-respected service across Canada and has been serving health professionals in Saskatchewan for 14 years. I would like this Assembly to join me in congratulating RxFiles on its innovative approach that enhances patient care by ensuring health professionals have easy access to drug information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Power Outages

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are people living on Saskatoon's west side who are very unhappy and frustrated. Some have experienced as many as five power

outages in the last week. Others have said there's been nine this month alone. Saskatchewan residents deserve better service than this, Mr. Speaker.

What is the minister's plan to ensure all SaskPower customers have a consistent source of power, something the folks in communities like Fairhaven have been without for months?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And we're fully aware at SaskPower that there have been a number of outages recently on the west side of Saskatoon. Couple of reasons for this, Mr. Speaker. The majority of the outages have occurred as a result of high-voltage, underground cable failures, and essentially there are some faulty connectors and a faulty controller. And what we do know, Mr. Speaker, is work is under way to ensure that these are being replaced.

More broadly based, Mr. Speaker, the main emphasis here is making sure that we're making repairs and making sure that we're revitalizing key aspects of the infrastructure, infrastructure that for years was overlooked by members opposite.

And I'll reference just a couple of figures, Mr. Speaker. In 2006 the members opposite were in power, they invested, through SaskPower, \$285 million; in 2007 in SaskPower, \$280 million. In our first year, Mr. Speaker, \$422 million in SaskPower infrastructure; in our second year, Mr. Speaker, \$640 million. In fact in our first two years, we saw an 88 per cent increase in infrastructure investment in SaskPower because we know that we had to make up for the infrastructure deficit that the members opposite left.

We continue that work. The work on the west side of Saskatoon is under way, and we're endeavouring to make sure that it will be corrected just as soon as possible.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Just for the minister's information, in the last seven years of government, the NDP [New Democratic Party] . . . in the last seven years of the NDP government, they invested almost 2.5 billion of capital investment in SaskPower. So the bottom line is the lights don't always come on, Mr. Speaker.

We have a Fairhaven mother who's had to care for her children by candlelight. Bathing and feeding your kids in the dark might be an adventure once. The first time it's fun, but it quickly grows old. We've got residents who are being hit with power outages when they try to make meals, when they're getting ready for work in the morning, or when they're making phone calls.

To the minister: these people want to know what he is doing now, not two months from now, not three months from now, not four months from now, but in January when it's minus 30 to assure them when they hit the power switch that there is in fact light, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we know in this instance that there are some specific challenges but, Mr. Speaker, SaskPower has decades of experience of providing safe, reliable, and affordable energy to the people of this province. That's going to continue.

In this instance, Mr. Speaker, as I've said, the majority of the outages have occurred as a result of a high-voltage, underground cable failure, and that's mostly in and around connectors and a faulty controller. Those have both been replaced already.

And as far as some additional steps, Mr. Speaker, we're working to make sure that there are a number of positions put in place to ensure that we're monitoring the quality assurance. Mr. Speaker, this speaks to a decades-old problem as far as infrastructure upgrades. We're continuing this work, especially as it relates to the west side of Saskatoon. And, Mr. Speaker, I understand there's going to be a meeting held tomorrow in Saskatoon, and SaskPower will have representatives there to ensure that we're dealing directly with citizens. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The owner of Panago Pizza on Diefenbaker Drive estimated last week he had lost between 1,500 and \$2,000 in spoiled pizzas and customers unable to call the restaurant. He is afraid that some of his customers have become frustrated and won't come back. When he asked for compensation from SaskPower, he was told to bring in an alternate source of power.

To the minister: does he think this small business owner and others should be compensated for financial and business loss due to persistent power outages?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, as I've said, there's a meeting that's going to take place tomorrow in Saskatoon, and we're going to make sure that SaskPower officials are there, Mr. Speaker. And we'll make sure that the citizens understand that SaskPower has a process whereby customers can submit claims for damages.

Mr. Speaker, again this is part of a process on infrastructure renewal, Mr. Speaker. We have a track record that speaks directly to making sure that we are helping to address the immediate concerns that the member is raising as well as the more structural concerns that have been decades in the making, Mr. Speaker. We're committed to ensuring that the people of this province through SaskPower continue to have safe, affordable, and reliable power. And, Mr. Speaker, I know the officials are looking forward to the meeting tomorrow.

[14:00]

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some of this work might take months, it might take years. But the bottom line is, what is SaskPower and what is the minister doing to make sure that in January, in the height of minus 30 weather, that the power is on in the west side of Saskatoon?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. As we continue our work through SaskPower, making sure that we're renewing infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, we're also addressing some of the issues directly on the west side of Saskatoon. In this instance, Mr. Speaker, most of the outages have been caused directly as a result of faulty connectors and a faulty controller. Those have both already been replaced, Mr. Speaker.

What we can also say, Mr. Speaker, is that these immediate steps are also going to be bolstered by a continuous monitoring process, Mr. Speaker. We know that there's an upcoming meeting. We're going to have officials there, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to make sure that, on behalf of SaskPower, the people of this province continue to have safe, affordable, and reliable power. And, Mr. Speaker, we're looking forward to hearing citizen feedback at that meeting that's forthcoming.

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

Shelter Accommodation

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Social Services has been housing many people in hotels like the Coachman, the Sunrise and the Quality Inn in Regina. There's been one man who's had to call the Coachman home for seven months, Mr. Speaker. He was housed in the Coachman for seven months at approximately \$2,676 a month, or about \$90 a day. He asked for an increase in his shelter allowance and was denied. The government has made the choice to house people in hotels rather than work with them to find affordable and appropriate housing.

To the minister: why is this government choosing to pay huge hotel bills instead of addressing inadequate shelter allowances?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know specifically the case the member is talking about. But I can tell you that we have raised emergency shelter rates by 85 per cent, and we've increased the number of spaces by 130 since we became government. Mr. Speaker, we have new spaces in Saskatoon in the Salvation Army Mumford House. And we know that there is more work to be done in this area, Mr. Speaker. And we also know that our hotel usage has decreased considerably in the last year. In February 2010, we were using an average of 427 rooms a night, and last year it was 30.

Mr. Speaker, we know there's more work to be done to ensure that people have a safe place to go in the evenings and at night.

But we also know that every individual, their cases are looked at to find out why they are still in a hotel, and there's always answers and reasons behind that.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, being housed in a hotel for seven months isn't emergency shelter and it becomes someone's home. And a hotel is not a home, Mr. Speaker.

We heard yesterday that Regina has the lowest vacancy rate in Canada, point six per cent. The average one-bedroom apartment in Regina costs \$790 a month. Shelter allowance for a single, unemployable person is \$459. Even if someone is eligible for the maximum rental supplement over and above this, this still puts them below the average one bedroom, if they can even find one, Mr. Speaker. While the core issue certainly is a lack of affordable rental units, the immediate issue is inadequate shelter allowances.

To the minister: both people, renters and taxpayers, are paying for the failure to address people's pressing housing needs. When will the minister recognize shelter allowances fail to match the reality of today's tight rental market?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, we know that the vacancy rates right now are about the same as they were last year at this time. And we know that there's an increase in the number of people in this province, so we are managing to keep up or get ahead of that pace.

But, Mr. Speaker, we do know that there are people that are in shelters right now and there's more work to be done. Some of the work that we've done in the last while is making sure that we have more affordable units on the market, more people that are buying into the idea of having the rental incentive program and affordable housing program. Right now we have 960 units that have been built since we became government; another 950 are on the way. Places like Regina have got applications for 900 rental incentive units.

Mr. Speaker, there's more work to be done. We know that, but we feel confident that working with the communities and the developers right around the province, we can address this issue that is part of one of the great parts of about a booming province.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, the government is currently paying for people to live in hotels. It costs about four times as much as they are willing to spend on shelter allowances. To the minister: she gave us some numbers, but how much is it costing us to house our citizens in hotels?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, knowing that people are living in a hotel or in a shelter isn't something that

anybody wants to hear about. But doing this is not something that happened because we became government. The same thing was happening under the NDP. The only difference is we increased the amount of money that we've given to people in shelters. We've increased the amount of shelter spaces there are, and we're working on making sure that there are more units for people.

Mr. Speaker, we know that we can't do those alone, and that's why we have about 200 non-government organizations that are working with us to ensure that we have places, and not only is it a home but a support for people. Mr. Speaker, the community-based organizations are working with our government, and together we're going to make a difference to everyone in this province.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Just to recap, Mr. Speaker, so the vacancy rate is at point six per cent in Regina. The average one-bedroom apartment is \$790 a month, shelter allowance for a single person is \$459. Again, even if someone is eligible for the maximum rental supplement, this still puts him or her — their total housing allowance — \$69 below the average cost of a one-bedroom apartment, if they can even find one.

The additional money that people pay to have a decent apartment comes out of their very limited living allowance, which means less food on the table or having to choose which prescription to fill. To the minister: taking everything into account — the low vacancy rate, the fact that the shelter allowances are not enough — is she prepared to immediately increase the shelter allowances so people can find adequate and affordable housing now?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I know that the member opposite cares about this issue, as do all of us on this side of the House. That's why we're working extremely hard. That's why we've got 5,700 units that are being prepared to be constructed in the next while. That's why we've invested \$309 million in housing.

Mr. Speaker, the vacancy rate that was talked about yesterday, there's another part of it that makes everybody understand that there is work being done. They're saying, "On the bright side," and I'm quoting from the *Leader-Post* today:

On the bright side, we're seeing the market respond. On the condominium side, we've seen a two-fold increase (from 2010). We've also noticed an increase in rental-designated starts, not just in Regina but right across Saskatchewan.

That's close to 3,000 multi-unit buildings we've built in this province, a 44 per cent increase from last year.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the shelter rates are something that have to be addressed, but in the long run we ought to make sure that there are affordable units for people, that there are places for people to go at night and to look at their individual needs.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with the people in the province to make sure they're pleased to call Saskatchewan home.

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

Housing

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Housing was unable to provide a good explanation to reporters between the difference between social housing and affordable housing. To the minister: does she now understand the difference, and is she able to explain it?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, there's a number of people in this province who know all about affordable units and social units, and I'm one of them.

Mr. Speaker, the affordable units are 90 per cent of the average market rent and social is geared to income. But, Mr. Speaker, 95 per cent of the seniors' units in this province are social housing units, and these are the kind of units that didn't see increases that were talked about yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, we are building more units. That's a part of our goal as the government is to make sure that there are units for people in the province. And not only that, we've indexed them through the cost of inflation seven times since we became government. Mr. Speaker, there is more work to be done, but when it comes to housing, our government puts this challenge at the front.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, to the hundreds if not thousands of people in affordable housing today, that's cold comfort as they're thinking about what to do. But here's a quote from the minister's scrum yesterday: "Right now we cannot have people staying in places that are below market value and just staying there." To the minister: what is the purpose of affordable housing, if not to be below market value?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — We know that the affordable housing markets are 90 per cent of the average market rate. We know that. Social housing is geared to income.

But, Mr. Speaker, all of a sudden after being out of government for a number of years, the NDP now has a real concern about it. I wonder why they didn't have a concern about it when they did not increase the benefits to seniors between 1992 and 2007, despite during that time having a 40 per cent increase in inflation. And the NDP did not increase shelter rates for 13 out of 16 of their years when they were in government, and at that time there was an inflation of over 30 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, during that time when they were in government it didn't look important to them to increase the shelter rates. Mr. Speaker, we know as government we have to increase them. We did it seven times in the last four years. There's more work to

be done, and it's something that's part of our policy as government. I assure you, Mr. Speaker, this issue is very important to us.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Housing was not only confused about social housing and affordable housing, she was also very confused about who's eligible for the rental supplement. Today I ask the minister does she now understand the difference about who is eligible and who's not? Can she explain this to the House?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I've explained to the member opposite a number of times, and I'll say it again. With social housing, the rent is geared to income and affordable housing, it's 90 per cent of the average market rent. Mr. Speaker, that is the premise we've been working on. It hasn't changed since they've become government. And we know that there are a number of units, like 10,500 senior units in this province that are under social housing. The rest of them are under affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to affordability and what we are doing as government, we have decreased the number of people that are paying taxes by 114,000. We've decreased the debt. We've put money back into the pockets of people. Mr. Speaker, single, low-income seniors in our province right now have saved \$1,200 per year in their pockets because of the taxes and the benefit changes. And if you're a couple, it's \$2,000 per year. Mr. Speaker, there's more work to be done. I know there is. But, Mr. Speaker, this is the work that we're doing at this time.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, my question was specifically about the rent supplement and who is eligible for the rent supplement. Would she please answer the question?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — People that are eligible for the rent supplement are families, Mr. Speaker, or people with a disability are eligible for our rental housing supplement. I think the member opposite should know that. We have about 5,900 people right now that are benefitting from the supplement, and it's something that we look at and we index. It wasn't done under the previous government, and it's the type of thing that we continue to look at. It's an important part of our budgetary process as we go ahead.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in the media scrum, the Minister of Housing was asked what is the advantage of Sask Housing if rents are going to simply keep pace with the market. The minister responded with this, and I quote: "Because there are still some that are going to be able to have the supplements as well."

To the minister: is it really her view that the advantage of Sask Housing, that people there can live there, can still receive supplements?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I think again that the member opposite knows that in certain circumstances the rental supplements are available to people, Sask Housing tenants. For example, a single mother whose income fluctuates is often eligible for a top-up from both the rental supplement program and from the Saskatchewan employment supplement. Our income assistance divisions and housing authorities work together on these issues.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the members opposite would like to just talk about what happened yesterday. I'd like to talk about what their concern was a number of years ago when we had people who were living in homes that were not kept up. There was no investment into the affordable housing. In fact the last year that they were government, they built 58 units. In the first four years we were in government, we built 968 units, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about who cares about people who are needing help from our government.

[14:15]

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're very proud of the fact that we introduced the rent supplement. But the issue today is about the rents are increasing in Sask Housing. The tenants are very upset, so that's where we're focusing on this issue today. And that minister should be aware of it and not be talking about last year or the year before, or in the out years.

I just want to ask her a question though. The minister repeated several times yesterday that if the rent in the government's affordable housing units is not close to rent in the private market, there would be no incentive for people to move out. To the minister: has she changed the mandate of Sask Housing, or is it still to provide safe and secure housing to those who cannot afford other options?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the policies that we have in Sask Housing are ones that are always being reviewed because we've got to make sure that the homes we own as government, that the people of this province own, are geared to people who most need them, Mr. Speaker. And you know, what we are doing at the same time is making sure that people have more money in their pockets and making sure that people are in those housing units that belong to the government, if they have an opportunity to move forward because they've earned more money, let's look at it, Mr. Speaker.

But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, I would think the members opposite should be pleased that our province is going ahead, that there are more people that are off the income tax rolls, that there are more people working, that our unemployment rate is one of the lowest in Canada. And together we are making sure

that Saskatchewan is going ahead.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the minister was asked the following question, and I quote, “Where would you find a better deal than social housing?” Her answer was this: “Well if we raise the rents and the rent is higher than you can get in the private market, they probably would move out.”

To the minister: is that the Sask Party’s plan, to raise rent in affordable housing units so it is higher than the rent in the private market?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I don’t know whether the member opposite is running out of questions or what he’s doing because right now what we’re talking about is making sure that it stays 90 per cent of the average rent. Mr. Speaker, that hasn’t changed.

But we also do know that there is more work to be done in this area. Mr. Speaker, we’re building affordable units, not just in Saskatoon and Regina and Prince Albert but right across the province. In fact our five point housing strategy talks about involving community partners, involving developers, involving builders, and making sure that right across a growing province there are units for people to be living in.

Mr. Speaker, I know the members opposite are focusing on affordability because they don’t believe that there’s a bright future in this province. In fact they probably are the only nine people left in the province who don’t because the rest of them are on this side of the House.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, of course we’re focusing on affordability, and it is the right thing to do. People are talking about that right across the province. So forgive us if we’re doing our job asking about affordable issues.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it was abundantly clear that as of yesterday the Minister of Housing had no understanding about the purpose of Sask Housing’s affordable housing units and when she chose to increase the rents. To the minister: now that she’s got her head around this, about what affordable housing’s supposed to be, will she do the right thing and cancel the rent increases? Thank you.

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, out of the 10,500 senior units that are operated by Sask Housing, these are the social housing. None of these units are subject to increase. Out of the remaining, which is 3 per cent of the seniors’ units, they have an increase to their affordable housing. We’ve looked at why, what we can do to make sure that it’s affordable. And, Mr. Speaker, I’ve told the member opposite that there’s another \$1,200 in the pockets of single seniors and there’s \$2,000 more in the pockets of couples. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite

didn’t look at this issue when they were in government because they didn’t increase seniors’ income benefits between 1992 and 2007.

Mr. Speaker, what is it . . . the people that they have right now, their seniors are important to the people of this province, and making sure that we have double the seniors, the number of people on seniors’ income plan. And after this year’s election three times increased, they have tripled the amount of people under the seniors’ income plan, Mr. Speaker, three times of the amount of money under those people.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 29 — *The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2011/Loi de 2011 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur l’exécution des ordonnances alimentaires*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my privilege today to rise in the House to move that Bill No. 29, *The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2011* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General that Bill No. 29, *The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2011* be read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Bill No. 30 — *The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Consequential Amendments Act, 2011*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 30, *The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Consequential Amendments Act, 2011* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General that Bill No. 30, *The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Consequential Amendments Act, 2011* be read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, not surprisingly, the next sitting of the House.

Bill No. 31 — *The Enforcement of Canadian Judgments Amendment Act, 2011/Loi de 2011 modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur l'exécution des jugements canadiens*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 31, *The Enforcement of Canadian Judgments Amendment Act, 2011* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General that Bill No. 31, *The Enforcement of Canadian Judgments Amendment Act, 2011* be read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Bill No. 32 — *The Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders Amendment Act, 2011/Loi de 2011 modifiant la Loi sur les ordonnances alimentaires interterritoriales*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 31, *The Enforcement of Canadian Judgments Amendment Act, 2011* be now introduced and read a first time.

Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I move that Bill No. 32, *The Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders Amendment Act, 2011* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General has moved Bill No. 32, *The Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders Amendment Act, 2011* for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Bill No. 33 — *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2011*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 33, *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2011* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Bill No. 33, *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2011* be read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the House.

Bill No. 34 — *The Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation Act, 2011*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 34, *The Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation Act, 2011* be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture that Bill No. 34, *The Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation Act, 2011* be read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

TABLING OF COMMUNICATION

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I have a communication from the Lieutenant Governor. Please rise.

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Pursuant to section 67 of *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 2007*, I hereby inform the Assembly

of the membership of the Board of Internal Economy effective November 24th, 2011 [that should have been December the 8th, 2011]: Hon. Dan D'Autremont, Chair; Hon. Don Morgan, Q.C.; Hon. Jeremy Harrison; Christine Tell, MLA; Doreen Eagles, MLA; David Forbes, MLA; Warren McCall, MLA.

Yours sincerely, Dr. Gordon L. Barnhart, Lieutenant Governor, province of Saskatchewan.

You may be seated.

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Pursuant to section 286 of *The Election Act, 1996*, I am submitting 95 copies of the report of the Saskatoon Northwest by-election, October 18th, 2010, to be tabled on Wednesday, December 14th, 2011.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 1 through 117.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled written questions 1 through 117, answered and tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 19 — *The Assessment Appraisers Amendment Act, 2011*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 19, *The Assessment Appraisers Amendment Act, 2011*.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will amend *The Assessment Appraisers Act* and make consequential amendments to *The Assessment Management Agency Act*. It also makes a related amendment to *The Agrologists Act, 1994*.

The Assessment Appraisers Act provides a legal framework for the regulated occupation of assessment appraisers who value property for municipal property tax purposes. The Act and its regulations have been in effect since November 1st, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed in this Bill are needed to do three things. One, first they will clarify the Saskatchewan Assessment Appraisers Association, SAAA's role in certifying or licensing all assessment appraisers involved in valuing property for municipal property tax purposes, whether or not they are members of the SAAA or not. This will ensure the credentials of all assessment appraisers are verified.

Second, amendments are needed to remove requirements related to the residency, employment, and membership, including one that exists in *The Agrologists Act, 1994*. This is to ensure that accreditation is based on knowledge, skills, education, and experience to better comply with the province's commitments and obligations regarding labour mobility.

And third, amendments will update the Act to the current model used for professions Acts in Saskatchewan, continuing government's practice to refine and update professions legislation ensuring it meets the needs of the profession, the association, and the public.

Mr. Speaker, I will expand on each of these three goals in turn. In terms of the first group of amendments, the Bill will clarify and reaffirm that the association fulfills two roles: an accreditation and licensing role for members and a certification role for non-members.

In 2002 the SAAA assumed the responsibility to verify the credentials of all assessment appraisers under *The Assessment Management Agency Act*. Clarification of the certification role is required to enable qualified assessment appraisers who do not wish to be members of the SAAA to work in Saskatchewan. Certifying the credentials of non-members includes verification of education and experience requirements as outlined in the Act and *The Assessment Appraisers Regulations*. The Bill ensures these individuals will meet the standards for proficiency and competency equivalent to the accreditation requirements for licensed members. Even though all assessment appraisers must be certified by the SAAA prior to working as an assessment appraiser, there is no requirement for them to become members of the SAAA.

Also included in this group of amendments, Mr. Speaker, are requirements for the SAAA to maintain and annually submit a register of all accredited members and certified non-members to SAMA [Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency] for quality assurance purposes.

Mr. Speaker, the second area of amendments will improve labour mobility. These changes clarify that licensing and certification are to be based on experience and education and remove requirements for residency in the province, employment, or membership in an association. These amendments include an amendment to *The Agrologists Act, 1994* that will allow qualified individuals who may not be agrologists to be certified to value agricultural land for property tax purposes. These qualified individuals would include rural assessment appraisers from other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize here that the amendments contained in the Bill, along with companion amendments to *The Assessment Appraisers Regulations* relating to qualification requirements, still ensure that only the qualified individuals will be able to be certified and licensed to assess land for property tax purposes. This includes agricultural land valuation. The proposed amendments and coordination with the regulations will set out the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to be a qualified assessment appraiser for property tax purposes. Agrologists will still be able to undertake agricultural land valuations, as will others who meet the education and experience that is required, and that will be set out in the

regulations.

[14:30]

My ministry is continuing to work on regulations that meet the needs of the profession and that comply with the province's labour mobility commitments and obligations. These regulations will be put forward once the amendments to the Act have passed in 2012, and will be developed in consultation with the SAAA, the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency, the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists, and the ministries of Agriculture and Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the third group of amendments in this Bill will update the Act to the current standards used for professional legislation in Saskatchewan. The proposed amendments in this respect include adding new provisions regarding the duty and objects of the association, ministerial bylaws, and restricted licences for those who do not have all the credentials outlined in the regulations, and could be used for trainees.

These amendments also address issues raised by the SAAA related to regulating its members, including providing for the new accredited title, Licensed Assessment Appraiser of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments were developed in consultation with representatives of the assessment appraisers sector, municipal associations, and provincial governments over 2009, 2010, and 2011. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those individuals who took the time to provide input, advice, and feedback in the development of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will assure the Saskatchewan Assessment Appraisers Association has a clearer direction regarding accreditation, certification, and membership issues. It will provide clarity regarding its role in the certification of non-member assessment appraisers and supports the ability for qualified individuals from other jurisdictions to perform municipal property tax evaluations, thus ensuring labour mobility.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, this Bill continues the government's practice to consult with regulated professions, to refine and update legislation, ensuring it meets the needs of the profession, the association, and the public. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs intends to continue working with the assessment appraisal sector to ensure that clear and appropriate regulations for the profession are established to work in concert with the amendments contained in this Bill.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 19, *The Assessment Appraisers Amendment Act, 2011*.

The Speaker: — The Minister for Municipal Affairs has moved second reading of Bill No. 19, *The Assessment Appraisers Amendment Act, 2011*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the opposition, I want to offer our comments and

insight on this particular Bill. I also want to thank the information that was flown through to or certainly sent to us as the official opposition to make sure that we had the opportunity to look at it very briefly and offer our initial comments.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the assessors in Saskatchewan play a very crucial role. And as the minister pointed out that every four years, every town and village, and certainly the people that have property in the province of Saskatchewan, have to have an assessor to come to their property and certainly look at what the property is worth and do the fine work that they do in this particular field, Mr. Speaker.

So I think if we look at the Bill, *An Act to amend The Assessment Appraisers Act*, there's a lot of different questions that pop up immediately. As an example, we look at their association. Did the association ask for this particular effort by the ministry? And if they didn't, what kind of role did they play? Obviously, you know, if you have an association — a professional association — and if they're telling people that they need help, as the case may be, that the . . . You're seeing that there's a lot of different professions that are not as full as they once were, and perhaps this might be the case in the province.

So the assessors themselves are out there doing their work, and I'm not sure of their numbers, how many members did they have in their association, what the process was in making sure that they were part of this. And the kind of list goes on from two or three questions to all of a sudden we come up to 20 to 30 questions. So I think it's really important that, as the opposition, that we pay very close attention to what this Bill is trying to do.

And I notice the key phrase that the minister used in some of his comments, mobility of trade. And I think what this is, Mr. Speaker — again as we've seen evidence over the last couple of days — there is a lot of Bills that are being attached to the New West Partnership where all of a sudden Alberta and Saskatchewan and BC [British Columbia] are forming this partnership. And we have to ask what the impacts are, not only for the environment, not only for workers' safety, but for the associations as well, the professional associations. And that's one of the reasons why, when you talk about the assessors in this particular Act, what does their association say about this? Do they want this thing to happen? Are they doing this under the gun in terms of being pressured by the government to allow this to move forward? These are some of the questions that we have to ask and we'll certainly ask over the next several months.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I go back to the numbers. I'm not sure how many properties on a yearly basis that is being assessed. But obviously as you know, from what I understand, that the assessors go into these communities and they do assess what the property is worth. And of course that's part of the taxation process. And these assessors certainly have gone through a lot of years of training. The experience is certainly there, and as I mentioned at the outset, that their work is quite valuable.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, as you allow others groups and organizations from other jurisdictions to come in, and they don't have to join your association but they can have the same blessing as the association members might have in terms of

being recognized by the people of Saskatchewan and recognized by the industry in general, does that create problems? That's the big question that I have as a result of this Bill. So I think we have to really begin to dig into the whole notion of, is this being acceptable or accepted by the association themselves?

Now I'm not sure how many years that are necessary to take the program to be a certified assessor, Mr. Speaker. And you look at some of the other jurisdictions that may want to come into Saskatchewan. Is it only from the Alberta and BC partnership or is it right across the province? Is there a shortage of all the assessors that we have in the province? Are there some constant complaints? Is the association supporting this move? These are some of the instinctive questions that we have as a result of hearing what the minister has to say.

And granted, you know, there is always room for improvement when you talk about bringing in new people into different fields and trades. And assessing property is one of those trades and fields that may need extra people or extra bodies. I'm not arguing that. But I'm just making sure that the effort of trying to build up those numbers are done in a co-operative and orderly fashion, that this is not all about the New West Partnership and shoving this thing down the association's throat to achieve what is a political plan, Mr. Speaker.

So I want to point out to the people that may be involved in this particular field, the assessors, there's so many different challenges that they have and so many different evaluations that they have to incorporate, so many different properties that they have to adapt to when they do their assessing. And it is quite an art.

And I will certainly point out that it's not an art in the sense that you can allow some half-hearted people that don't know exactly what they're doing into your field. There's always that turf that you want to protect. So that's one of the things I think people ought to be worried about when it comes to this particular Act.

And the people of Saskatchewan deserve a lot, Mr. Speaker. And certainly because all their properties — whether it's in northern Saskatchewan or whether it's in the cities or whether it's in the towns and villages that are throughout our province — their property is impacted by this Bill. Because obviously the people that come to your homes to do the assessment of your property, then you want to make sure that that assessor or that person, that man or woman, are not only certified but they're accepted by their association and that they have the Saskatchewan interests in mind and not bringing in other prejudices from other practices from other jurisdictions into our province. And that's I think a key message that we would certainly want to bring forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's all about understanding what the assessor does. It's all about the accreditation of the assessor to make sure that what they had to do to gain the reputation, and certainly gain the ability to be classified as a assessor, that we don't discredit that, that we make sure that this is part of what the government does, is recognize those that have paid their dues, those that have the experience and those that know exactly what they're doing, Mr. Speaker.

So as I mentioned at the outset again of this Bill, that people's . . . the role of the assessor is vital. There are hundreds of millions of dollars at stake not only in property evaluations but in looking at the budgets of major cities, of towns and villages. And this is something that we can't not take the time to understand as an opposition, but more so that we would ask the public to make sure they pay very close attention to what is being done here when you're dealing with the assessors association in general.

I did not note, in the minister's comments or didn't catch it if he did speak about it, the fact that the association themselves, what is their feeling towards this effort? Are they supportive? Is there some reservations on some of the fronts? I didn't get that information. And of course, we want to make sure that we don't take the minister's word that this occurred. Because there is two things that ought to be first and foremost in people's minds, Mr. Speaker.

When you hear a minister saying that we consulted with this association on this matter, people ought to know that "we consulted" could be a whole different meaning from their perspective to a whole different understanding from the association's point of view. Because you can consult with people; it doesn't mean you necessarily have their co-operation. And that's the key point I'm trying to make here today, is that as they stand up and they say we consulted with their association, they seem fine with this, Mr. Speaker, that does not mean that they're supportive of this.

And a lot of times we find that this particular government will shove things down a lot of association's throats, and this might be the case with this particular Bill. And that's one of the reasons why we need to have that private consultation with their association to see if there's some way that we can strengthen this Act or expose the weakness in this Act that they want exposed so the people of Saskatchewan know that this is something that needs to be looked at, that this is something that needs to be changed, and that we would want their association to speak up and to stand up and to bring forward those changes that they desperately may want, Mr. Speaker. And I underline, may want.

Now I think one of the other points that we would raise is that people in Saskatchewan usually don't have much involvement with the actual assessment of their property. What they do is they hire a bunch of assessors. And of course the towns' and villages' leaders, the mayors and council, they have more of an active role with the assessors.

And SAMA itself has been around for many, many years. And they're the association that does a lot of work, and they're directed to do a lot of work. And they have had budgets that they've had control of, and they've been doing this kind of work for years and years and years. So as an agency, as an agency, what is their position on this matter? Are they supportive?

Again going back to the demand; is there a demand for assessors? Was there a call by their association or the members or individual members or a sector of the association, they're asking us to do this? Was there a specific problem that they wanted to help solve and they asked the minister to put this in

place? And we don't have that information. We don't know that for certainty, Mr. Speaker. So that's one of the things I think we need to make sure that we look at and we try and seek that information as best we can.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I said in the Bill, that the Bill, as per the minister's comments, are quite straightforward, that they want to be able to bring in an assessor. And the assessor could come from different places in the country, I'm assuming, and that as long as they meet the association of assessors criteria and qualifications, they can actually do assessment in the province. And they don't have to be a member, but the association has to certify their skill, has to certify their ability.

And that's kind of where I get a bit confused. Why would the association allow other assessors to come into our province that may have different ideas or different training or different tools that they bring from their jurisdiction and not have them become part of the provincial association? It kind of seems odd at times that if you look at the one example, one of the Bills yesterday when they said if you register as a company in one jurisdiction, you can be recognized in all the other three. In this case with the assessment association, they're saying that you don't have to be a member in Saskatchewan, but as long as you're certified by these guys, you can certainly do the assessment of property in our province.

So it's kind of a contradiction here in terms of saying on one hand you don't have to follow these rules in our province, but at the same time if you register to do business in BC, you can do business in the province of Saskatchewan. So is there an attack on the association of professional people in our province? And that's kind of what we need to find out.

[14:45]

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of challenges in this particular Bill that we can see almost immediately. There are things that we don't like that we have a lot of questions on. We need to sit down and certainly speak with SAMA and with the association themselves to see how they feel about this particular issue. And again the questions we have is, why is the minister doing this at this time? Was there a desire on their part, or was there a heavy need on the industry part? Like how does that work? Is it something that they wanted?

So again at the outset, this Bill primarily talks about making sure that we have access to more appraisers and people that are able to assess property properly in the province, and this is about allowing them to come into our province, do their work as long as they meet the certification of the association but do not have to be members. Now I don't know if that's generally accepted by the people of Saskatchewan. I don't know, as I mentioned, whether the association likes that idea. I don't know if SAMA cares otherwise in terms of as long as they get the work done.

These are some of the things we need to find out about this particular Bill because it's so important on two fronts. It's so important on two fronts that this work be done properly. One involves the assessment of your home, and of course it involves the land taxes you pay to your city, town, or village. So we need to find that out, and we also need to do a contrast, a contrast of

how some of these appraisers are actually trained in different provinces. Is Alberta's training less than Saskatchewan's? I, being a Saskatchewan guy, I would say yes, every other jurisdiction doesn't meet our standards. Well, Mr. Speaker, is there a community college somewhere in BC that automatically offers appraisal courses for six weeks and, bang, all of a sudden they're certified?

So we have to make sure that what happens is the industry and the craft of these appraisers — the work that they do, the effort that they undertake, the training that they have, the standards that they set — is not lowered as a result of this particular Bill, of allowing other people that may have less experience, less desire, less professionalism into the province, and all they've got to do is prove that they were trained in this and they don't have to be a member of the association.

So that's where I kind of . . . there's a lot of red flags in that general area, Mr. Speaker. And we need to have that connect with the people that are involved with this industry, and mayors and reeves and councillors are also involved, school divisions as well. So you can see that we can speak on this particular Bill for the next two hours, if necessary. But obviously we have to make sure people out there in the province know exactly what is being done here. And we have to make sure that they have the opportunity to come back and to make changes or challenge this government or to provide information to the opposition. There's all these avenues that they could take advantage of to make sure that their opinions and their take and certainly their comments and their solutions to this particular Bill, Bill No. 19, to make sure that the minister and the government and the people understand what this is all about.

So, Mr. Speaker, a lot more questions than answers from the minister's initial comments. We will vigorously look through this Bill. We will investigate with all the stakeholders as to what the challenges may be. And we will fulfill our role as the opposition, and we will seek that advice.

And, Mr. Speaker, at the outset I said it seemed pretty straightforward. But as we know, there's always ulterior motives with this government. And we look very carefully at every Bill that comes our way, and we shall continue doing so to ensure that this Assembly works as it should work and the people of Saskatchewan have as much information in front of them as possible.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 19.

The Speaker: — The member for Athabasca has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 19, *The Assessment Appraisers Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 20 — *The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2011*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Municipal

Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 20, *An Act to amend The Planning and Development Act, 2007*. The Act to amend *The Planning and Development Act, 2007*, P & D [planning and development] Act, updates the municipal planning framework. The framework provides municipalities with clear, consistent, and effective tools for land use planning to promote economic growth, environmental stewardship, social and cultural development, and co-operative partnerships with other municipalities, governments, First Nations, Métis entrepreneurs, and interested stakeholders.

Community planning engages the public to build a vision founded on the values and assets of a community and articulates this vision in a plan to attract and secure investment which meets the community's goals and objectives into the future. This Act will improve the opportunities for intermunicipal co-operation, servicing, and dispute resolution, contributing to vibrant, safe, self-reliant communities and regions.

Mr. Speaker, through 2009, 2010, 2011, Municipal Affairs initiated extensive stakeholder consultations in a response to requests from municipal, business, and community stakeholders for legislative amendments to increase the transparency of fees, the range of eligible items for which fees and levies could be collected, servicing arrangements between municipalities, the application of architectural controls to development, and dispute resolution for district planning commissions. The amendments also respond to pressures arising from intermunicipal disputes, the need to improve the options for intermunicipal co-operation, the complexities of decision making in large planning districts, and regional infrastructure and servicing challenges.

The consultations involved municipal governments and associations, industry sector groups, agricultural and environmental agencies, the heritage sector, planning districts, the transportation sector, professional associations, and provincial ministries. Mr. Speaker, the input from these consultations has been instrumental in developing these amendments and will make a substantial contribution to building the future of Saskatchewan's communities.

The amendments are designed to provide additional flexibility for municipalities to jointly plan and manage areas of common interest, improve the mechanics of decision making for large district planning commissions, provide the minister with the ability to delegate approving authority status to a district planning authority, provide dispute resolution processes for district planning commissions and district planning authorities, increase municipal flexibility to effectively service and cover the cost of development, and address incidental housekeeping items.

I will take just a few minutes to share some details of the amendments.

Additional flexibilities being proposed for municipalities to jointly plan and manage areas of common interest. Proposed changes create a new framework for planning, providing four rather than two options for municipalities to plan jointly and

manage areas of common interest. To help facilitate joint planning initiatives, intermunicipal development agreements are proposed to help manage growth pressures at the urban-rural fringe. These agreements are an expeditious option for municipalities to address a variety of challenges, such as joint planning, dispute resolution, infrastructure management, and environmental stewardship. This type of co-operation is being demonstrated around Estevan, east of Regina, and throughout Saskatchewan where intermunicipal planning is proving beneficial.

Joint initiatives set the stage for more formal partnerships, and we are pleased to see the beginnings of 12 potentially new district planning commissions as a result of incentive funding from the planning for growth program. The proposed amendments will improve the mechanics of decision making for large district planning commissions by providing flexibility in the district plan and a mechanism to address local land use issues which do not affect other members of a district.

Under the proposal, municipalities affiliated with the planning district will be able to prepare a district plan which can function in one of two ways: where local plans do not exist, the district plan may contain both regional and local policies; alternatively where local plans do exist, the district plan will provide broad, regional direction to its members. This flexible approach ensures existing districts are not impacted and better accommodates large planning districts, such as WaterWolf with 35 municipalities and one First Nation. In this situation, it is impractical to have a single plan that meets the needs of all the communities, and it is cumbersome to amend, requiring complementary resolutions from all participating municipalities.

The proposal also provides the opportunity for district planning authority to be granted approving authority status. DPA [district planning authority] are corporate bodies authorized by their member councils to make planning districts on official community plans and zoning bylaws, administer the planning process, and issue development permits. A DPA with approving authority status would have expanded authority for planning and zoning under the P & D Act and would have the autonomy to approve subdivisions, thereby enhancing local and regional capacity. Although there are currently no district planning authorities in the province, there is one district planning commission considering this transition. This amendment would provide the opportunity for the DPA to offer expanded, centralized, and professional planning and development services.

New provisions have also been prepared, consistent with *The Cities Act* and *The Municipalities Act*, to provide dispute resolution processes for district planning commissions and district planning authorities. Where a municipality and a planning district is unable to resolve a dispute with other members and has requested withdrawal or where a planning district has requested dissolution, the Minister of Municipal Affairs may refer the matter to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. These amendments provide a non-political process for resolving municipal disputes and encourages intermunicipal co-operation and provincial interest.

As the province continues to enjoy sustained growth, it is

essential municipalities have flexibility to effectively service and cover the cost of development. Municipalities that recover the true cost of servicing new development reduce the demand on the province to provide additional infrastructure funding and reduce the infrastructure deficit to the community.

The P & D Act currently provides municipalities with a variety of tools to recover the cost of managing and servicing new development. These include zoning bylaw fees or subdivision fees, and servicing fees, and development levies. The proposed amendments will ensure zoning bylaw and subdivision fees established by municipalities are rational and transparent to the public and development industry. Changes to development levies and servicing agreements provide municipalities with the flexibility to enter into agreements on lands outside of their jurisdiction if they are directly servicing a subdivision or developments. Provisions allowing for the negotiation of municipal utility parcels as part of servicing agreements have been added as well. This will ensure adequate land is set aside for the installation of municipal public works.

Several general housekeeping issues raised by stakeholders since the adoption of the P & D Act have been addressed, including clarifying development of appeal board membership, architectural controls, bylaw notification requirements, and exemption from subdivision approval for federal rail development.

Amendments requested by municipalities and the development industry which have not been addressed within this proposal include the request by SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association], and the cities of Saskatoon and Regina to expand the list of fees and levies to include fire suppression infrastructure and facilities. Home builders and developers opposed the provisions which they believe do not account for the impact on current and future homeowners, renters, consumer spending, housing affordability, or economic investment into major centres and more broadly Saskatchewan. They also oppose the shift from funding this type of infrastructure and facility through new development rather than general taxation. As a result, this provision has been removed and will be considered in future discussions with the sector and development industry.

Also not addressed in the request, to provide for municipalities to specify architectural details such as colour, texture, and type of materials as a condition of a discretionary development permit or contracting zoning approval. Tools already exist within the P & D Act to provide for the establishment of architectural control districts to maintain the character or theme of neighbourhoods.

Finally, request to change the servicing agreement process to allow subdivision approval to be granted prior to the signing of a servicing agreement was considered impractical as it does not protect the interests of the municipality, and providing mechanisms to permit the collection of fees or levies following annexation without subdivision or redevelopment will require additional analysis and discussion.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that these amendments maintain local autonomy, increase local flexibility to address

the development concerns, provide greater clarity in community planning processes, and enhance intermunicipal opportunities for co-operation. I would also like to note we received broad support from the municipal sector, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, and the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association on these amendments. I would urge each and every member of the House to review and support this Bill. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 20.

The Speaker: — The Minister for Municipal Affairs has moved second reading of Bill No. 20, *The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2011*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm also pleased to join the debate and certainly offer our insight on Bill No. 20. And what I would point out, Mr. Speaker, is that this particular Bill certainly is rife with challenges and questions and problems that we foresee, and that's why it's nice to be able to get up here today and explain some of the challenges that we see and our perspective on this Bill. So certainly from the opposition's perspective, I am quite pleased to join the debate.

It's always important to point out that when you looked at the problem of trying to cope with growth, that is always a work-in-progress. Mr. Speaker, from 2001 the province of Saskatchewan has seen a lot of the economic growth that we're still benefiting from this day, and we're pleased to see that growth continues. Now what people ought to know out there in the province of Saskatchewan is that the growth will continue in spite of this government, just that Saskatchewan is great in what they do. The business community, the people are certainly are in tune with what needs to happen. We have oil and gas. We have diamond. We have forests. We have the works coming to the province.

[15:00]

And the province of Saskatchewan is rich. We've always maintained that. And now you look at how the people have come and finally recognized our province after a number of tough years in the '80s. It's nice to see that that growth continues in the '90s and certainly in 2000 and beyond.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would point out, I would point out that the district planning commission, which I think is really a concept that we need to look at, that as you look at how Saskatchewan has developed . . . And I can remember a headline in 2001. And it certainly pointed out and the headline read that "Saskatchewan's star is shining bright" in terms of the economy. That headline still stuck in my mind because we can see that there was a lot of activity, things were starting to move, and things were going really great, Mr. Speaker. And what happened at the time of 2003 when the election came along, the people of Saskatchewan gave the then government, NDP, the opportunity to continue that work, Mr. Speaker. And you can see that as times went on, we got better and we got stronger as a province. People were moving to Saskatchewan, and the economy was really beginning to boom, Mr. Speaker.

Now what we've told the caretakers of that economy, the Saskatchewan Party, is don't mess it up. That's what we've

said. The four years that you've had, please don't mess it up. So now we're looking at these particular Bills here, Mr. Speaker, to make sure they don't do that, that they don't mess it up. And that's why I think it's important that we pay very close attention to what this minister and other ministers are proposing because you want that economy to keep building and to keep moving, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the great opportunity that the province has enjoyed and will continue to enjoy to this day is making sure that we continue building the future, Mr. Speaker. That's what is really, really important.

And from our perspective as an opposition party, we view some of the Bills that are being brought forward very closely. We look at them. We scrutinize them because, Mr. Speaker, we don't want to see, we don't want to see anything impede that plan for Saskatchewan that was developed a number of years ago, Mr. Speaker.

Now I point out that when we spoke about the challenge of growth that the NDP had, certainly, Mr. Speaker, we had to grapple with some of the issues that are being mentioned in this particular Bill. Now we don't have no problem with a district planning commission as long as it complies with a number of principles, Mr. Speaker. And that's what's really important: that it's fair to all the parties, that it's fair to all the people that are being involved. Because obviously you want to be able to have these districts of activity. You want them to be able to coordinate and to co-operate and to communicate with each other. That part is a fair point to make.

We're not arguing that at all because obviously as you get these hubs or these areas that are co-operating, you want to see that continue because in the long run it's good and it's healthy for the people of Saskatchewan. And we in the opposition certainly support that notion. But you've got to make sure it's based on the principle of fairness, Mr. Speaker, that you're not pushing one partner away or one core value of that planning area, pushing that aside and not incorporating their position or their principles, Mr. Speaker.

And the point I would use is you often see that in a lot of the environmental groups. You see this in the Aboriginal groups where sometimes when you look at the urban sprawl, is there some problems that that will create in terms of First Nations traditional territory? Is there any kind of problems it may create environmentally? Are we doing this right to make sure that there's a number of principles intact?

And that's the key thing that I would attach to this particular Bill. Because while the minister is certainly alluding to things like a co-operative partnership, talking about resolving disputes and arguments, talking about fees, talking about intermunicipal co-operation, but then in the next breath talking about picking winners and losers. You have to be very careful here because if we don't plan this right, if you don't go, move forward with the right attitude under these district planning commissions, there are going to be problems. And how are these commissions going to be established, Mr. Speaker? We don't know that.

So the theory of trying to make sure that you have regions that are highly interactive, not only from the business perspective but from the municipal perspective, and involving as many of the players in the region as you can — nothing wrong with that

theory. It's certainly something that the people of Saskatchewan would applaud and that the people of Saskatchewan would love to see happen on a grander and greater scale, Mr. Speaker. That's why they talk about vision. And that's why when we opened up some of the discussions on this particular Bill . . . We certainly saw the vision many, many years ago that we needed to create these hubs of economic activity that I think would be attached to the same concept that the minister now rephrases as a district planning commission.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's thousands of examples here in the city alone and northern Saskatchewan where people have gotten together and regions are starting to form. And yes, it's not just about developing a subdivision; there are greater and grander plans and strategies and visions attached to that particular concept.

So I would say, Mr. Speaker, when the minister alludes to things like fees which seems to pop up quite a bit . . . When you talk about expansion, you talk about development, and so on and so forth, fees are always top of mind. When you talk to any local leader, when you talk to a business person, fees are always in, well certainly, in the back of their minds.

So I would say that the transparency of fees . . . Like I don't know any person in the province that would say, well the fees weren't transparent. They are very capable business people, very shrewd people. They know what fees are being put in place. So as the minister brings that particular aspect to the forefront in his point, saying that the fees need to be transparent, he leads people to believe that these fees were hidden. Fees that governments have on any fronts are always transparent. They're there for a purpose, and they're there to administer what I think is a cost of the province when you talk to different people, as an example that he used, development of certain subdivisions. So, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of information here that we really need to pay attention to.

And I want to go on to the First Nations, you know, if I can, Mr. Speaker, and the Métis as well. We know that they're also involved with a lot of the developments not just within their areas but also within the cities. I'm very proud and honoured that one of the First Nations in my area, the English River First Nation has the Grasswood Esso, or Grasswood service centre. It's about maybe a couple miles out of Saskatoon, but that's where I stop and gas up, Mr. Speaker.

And they've got a hotel there. They've got a gas station. They've got a number of convenience stores there as well. So it's just fantastic to be able to see that English River has set this business up, I think it's got to be at least 12, 13 years ago. And they've been doing very well. It's a joint venture partnership between Tron, and I know that they probably participated in a district planning process then. And I hope that they're part of the process now because obviously they are doing very well. And they're an example and they're one of the people that I will speak about, one of the groups that I speak about when I mention First Nations.

You look further to, further west, Whitecap. I know with their chief who has done a tremendous amount of work, not only in terms of building a brand new economy, creating jobs for his people, but Chief Bear is one of the people that could give us an

incredible amount of advice and insight as to how the First Nations need to be part of a district planning commission.

So that's the point I'm trying to make to the people of Saskatchewan, that is not just about SUMA. It's not just about the developers. It's about the environment. It's about the role that the First Nations and Métis people could play. So you've got to make sure that you involve all the different players under a district planning commission scenario, as indicated by the minister and the Bill he's trying to bring forward.

So instead of us talking about co-operative relationship, talking about intermunicipal development, talking about dispute resolution, talking about the fee, picking winners and losers, my advice to the minister is that this is probably one of the most important Bills that he will deal with for a long time, Mr. Speaker, and he's got to get it right. He's got to get it right. Because we've seen evidence and we have certainly read a lot of these stories of some areas that have had this problem before where the urban sprawl is just creating enormous pressures on smaller communities next to these cities. It's creating environmental nightmares when you're talking about how they're dealing with the increase in growth.

And certainly it's also talking about how we needed to learn the lessons of that particular . . . some of the examples throughout the world on how we need to do it in Saskatchewan to make sure that we mitigate the challenges that the minister may speak about when he talks about planning for a certain area.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I again point out that there are a lot of people, a lot of people that are keenly interested in participating in this district planning commission. You know, they certainly are. Yes, they'll make sure that the fees are transparent, that there's a place that they can have their arguments and that they're kind of settled after a while. And they can certainly make sure that they do their part to build a certain area because if they're all built together, all the players build this together with the same principles and the same ideas, then the district planning commission makes good sense. It makes good sense.

And it certainly allows, I think, the economy of Saskatchewan another added bonus in the sense that you have certain regions that you don't have to worry about overall. And you know that there are some really good groups and organizations involved in planning for a certain region and planning for a certain area which then allows you to do two things: is identify your role as the government to say, okay what is it that this district planning committee needs to help us accommodate the strengthening of the economy in your area? And it's not so much as the government handing them money, it may be simple things as fixing roads. It may be simple things as making sure that they have advice on some areas. And that, I think, is pretty key.

But the other point is that after you've got those professional, dedicated, educated people doing the work that's necessary, that really plans the area well from the many aspects that I spoke of, it allows you to look at other areas, to concentrate on other areas and other regions that need the assistance, that need the support, and that need the attention. And as you begin to do that, you build a stronger, braver, newer Saskatchewan. And certainly that was the vision that we had as a government. And we would certainly hope that the government of the day today

would not try and do anything to mess up that initial vision and the groundwork that was done to bring Saskatchewan to where it is today, Mr. Speaker.

I would point out that the local and regional policies . . . I've known a lot of people in Saskatchewan, travelled a lot of places during my time here, and I know wherever you go, you see a vibrancy in the people of Saskatchewan. They are committed, and they have some very innovative solutions. And sometimes they sometimes misunderstand each other. And if you get a regional or a district planning commission together, that's where I think that greater minds will meet, and the common good of Saskatchewan will certainly be the theme that many of the people will certainly try and build upon. And if they get them in a room together, I've seen so many times that they're willing to resolve some of their differences and do the work that's necessary to solve the problem in that area and continue building their communities and their towns.

And that's the important point that I wanted to raise, is that as you have a commission established, it's not about fees. It's not about having this big fight. It's not about a huge demand and drain on the government finances. It's about empowering the people, the communities, and the ideas and the concepts they have and making sure that you are guided by a number of principles, whether it's respect for First Nations, involving the Métis, watching how it impacts the environment, making sure that you're not hurting businesses to help other businesses set up by picking winners and losers, making sure that you don't slant the power of the district planning commission to favour others as opposed to our local people. These are some of the pitfalls that you have to really be careful of and you have to really watch, Mr. Speaker.

So Bill No. 20, again you know, it appears that it's just simply a housekeeping item, that the minister wants to set up a district planning commission and do all this kind of work to make sure that we continue building. But it's much grander, it's much greater than what I think the minister is able to express in this Bill today. But as an opposition, I want to point out that the people out there that have seen this kind of thing being undertaken and spoke of these things 20 years ago, that they know what they thought of 20 years ago. And that's certainly what the NDP thought of 10 years ago when they started building this economy of which you're seeing a great amount of benefits coming from today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I go back to the point that when you look at the impression that the minister wants to give to this Bill, is that we will handle the disputes of different parties under this district planning commission. Now I want to know how that mechanism is being established. Because obviously if we have a dispute — it may be between a land developer and say a neighbouring town or village — who is going to resolve that dispute? Who is going to appoint the people to sit on that committee, so to speak, of this commission, to determine who is right: a big, large developer from downtown Calgary, or the kind folks of a small community next to the place that this person wants to, you know, to buy. Is there any value in the fact that you're from Saskatchewan? Does that help you? Is it all about just the big developers and it's not about the people, then you can see the disconnect, Mr. Speaker. And that's exactly the principles that we as the NDP team want to make sure is part of

any of that original plan of growth that we developed some 10 years ago, Mr. Speaker.

[15:15]

Now obviously there is always the opportunity for a clash of opinion, a clash of ideals, so we need to know from the minister, fine, that you have some blessing from SUMA. We don't mind. SUMA's a great organization. They've got a great history, and they will certainly add to the solution. But with all due respect to SUMA, we must reach out to other groups to make sure that we do this right, that we do the district planning commission and the ideals behind it, we do it properly, we do it fairly, and we do it sustainably.

And that's one of the biggest words that we've heard over the last number of years, given some of the challenge to the environment, is that we have to have sustainability of our communities. We've got to incorporate that in our minds of how we conserve energy, how we develop our water and sewer systems, of how we develop our park systems, how we keep the natural habitat in and around our community as pristine as possible, how we kind of consume things on a constant basis. We have to incorporate that because we do live in an area that has finite clean water, finite clean air, and certainly land that is in really good shape.

So we have to incorporate that kind of a challenge within this whole district planning commission. And that's why it's important to point out to people, is this incorporated in this planning commission? Are the environmental qualities and the environmental monitoring and the environmental strategies, are they attached to this commission? And I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that they're not because the minister didn't make any comment or any reference to that.

Our First Nations and Métis participation, is it guaranteed in this particular planning commission? That has not been identified in this Bill whatsoever, and that's one of the reasons why we're offering our opinions today, that there is so many things that might be missed under the guise of district planning commissions, as the Bill points out.

We think that there are many things that are deficient in this Bill, and that's one of the reasons why the opposition will take the time to explain what we envision that is attached to this Bill and the fact that many, many people know that this Bill goes way beyond the minister's understanding. And that's why he's basically made a few small points attached to what he thinks is the complete package for a district planning commission Bill.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have some distance to go on this Bill. I would hope that the minister can backtrack a bit to the late '90s and early 2000-2001 and begin to see what people like Eric Cline had to say. People like Lorne Calvert, people like Eldon Lautermilch, Joanne Crofford — these people that have helped certainly shaped the future of this economy. They had some great concepts. They had some great ideas, Mr. Speaker. They had some great people beside them that developed this whole economy and developed this whole theme. And they wanted to make sure that if the development occurs, that it'd have the principle of fairness, the principle of balance between the environment, the economy, the principle of inclusiveness to

make sure that the First Nations, Métis, the small towns and villages, and those people that the government might not think are important, that they be included in this vision and this plan.

And as I mentioned at the outset in some of my comments, that this is not a good province for any of us unless it's a good province for all of us. And that's one of the themes and the principles that we incorporated when we began developing this economy that the province now enjoys. We are proud of that history, Mr. Speaker, and that's why this Bill, Bill 20, when you talk about a district planning commission, there is much, there was a much grander vision attached to a district planning commission that the minister spoke about. And people of Saskatchewan have to know it, that there was a great strategy in place, and it just so happens these guys are benefiting from that.

But we're proud of our history. We're proud of our history. And I know there's many occasions that the Premier gets up and puts on a show about how great his government is, ready for growth, and on and on. On this side of the House, we know that he just inherited that. He inherited that booming economy. He has admitted time and time again. And my message to him and his team: don't mess it up.

So when you have Bills like this, when you have Bills like this, make sure you don't just take, pick pieces up to make sure you want to incorporate your own values on some of these Bills. Pick up the whole package because the whole package is well thought out, and the package is including a lot of people that this government currently is not including, Mr. Speaker. And that's our message to them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I was blessed to have the opportunity to share a number of conversations and being in the same room as people like Romanow, as people, as I mentioned, like Eric Cline, Lautermilch, Sonntag. These are people that are no longer here today, Mr. Speaker, but their work is being felt here today. And the work that they've done and the vision and the thought they put through in designing this economy, we're enjoying today.

Those guys over there are claiming credit for it, Mr. Speaker. They're claiming credit for it, and so be it. So be it. We're not going to argue. We're not going to beat our own drum. But the longer and the grander speeches that they might want to make about how they built it, the whole rest of the province just kind of rolls their eyes and say, yes okay, whatever. You know that's exactly what they say, Mr. Speaker.

So my point is, enjoy. Enjoy the fruits of our labour as you embrace this new economy, and enjoy and have fun. Have fun because eventually what's going to happen is you're going to have to stand up on your own two feet based on what you're able to do and based on the mistakes that you're going to make. And we'll see you, we'll see where this government takes this economy, Mr. Speaker. Because at the rate they're going, Mr. Speaker, and the lack of vision they have on Bills like this, you're going to see that this province of Saskatchewan is actually going to start going backwards, Mr. Speaker, primarily because, primarily because they don't heed the advice of people that designed the economy that they're benefiting from by making sure they incorporate all aspects of that master strategy and that master plan, Mr. Speaker.

And the point that I would make, Mr. Speaker, is that any time you do a Bill that talks about district planning on strengthening the local economy and the regional economy and therefore strengthening the provincial economy, please take into account that there were some great minds before you and before me and before others in this Assembly that really thought things through. And listen to the advice that they've given you and make sure you take that advice and incorporate that in some of the Bills, as in this Bill that you're trying to propose, because it's going to be of great service to the people of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't know the future of anything in terms of how strong the economy will get. I pray that the work that was done will continue building. But if we start moving away from the core values of inclusiveness, of fairness, of respect for the working man, of taking care of the environment, of looking after others that are less fortunate than us, then what happens, as this Bill indicates, you exclude people. If you don't incorporate the proper values, then you're going to fail. And that's the problem I would point out to the minister, is be careful on any Bills that you propose, that you look at incorporating many other values, not just your own agenda because your own agenda is only as far as you can see, as far as I can see is short-sighted, Mr. Speaker.

So whether it's the district planning commission talking about incorporating local and regional policies, we on this side say: be inclusive of environmental challenges; be inclusive of the Aboriginal people; be inclusive of the small towns and the villages. Look at the history. Look at the advice afforded in the past. Seek leadership from other places and other sectors and other parties because, in the long run, if you put together a good plan in place and it strengthens the people of the province of Saskatchewan and strengthens all people of Saskatchewan, the people on this side believe in those core values. And that's why we would support some of these Bills.

But we see that they're not, they're not doing the necessary work. They're not doing any vision. They're not doing any planning, not being fair in their process. Then why would we sit here and say, yes okay, we would support that? And that's one of the roles of the opposition, Mr. Speaker. That's one of the roles of the opposition is to hold this government to account. And if they have Bills like this that come forward that are instrumental to the building of our economy in general and they lack vision, it lacks support, it lacks all the necessary aspects, then, Mr. Speaker, we have to make sure that we remind them that they don't know everything about building any economy, that they must seek advice from all these sectors.

And it's on that point, Mr. Speaker, that I know my colleagues have a lot more issues that they want to raise on this particular Bill because there is a lot at stake in this particular Bill. And we'll pay very close attention to this Bill. And on that note, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The member for Athabasca has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 20, *The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

**Bill No. 27 — *The Education Amendment Act, 2011/*
*Loi de 2011 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation***

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move the second reading of Bill No. 27, *The Education Amendment Act, 2011*. To meet the Premier's commitment for students to start the 2012-13 school year after the Labour Day long weekend, I am proposing a number of necessary amendments to the Act. This change will mean that students and their families can fully enjoy the last long weekend of summer as they do in other provinces including British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario.

First, Mr. Speaker, I propose to amend the definitions of academic year and school day in section 2 to read as follows:

“**academic year**” means that portion of a school year commencing on the first school day and ending on the last school day of that school year, as those dates are determined in accordance with section 163 and the regulations.”

And:

[the] “**school day**” means a day within a school year on which instruction is given to pupils or examinations or other educational activities involving pupils are conducted, and includes time authorized by a board of education or the . . . [Conseil des écoles fransaskoises], as the case may be, for the purposes of non-instructional time as prescribed in the regulations”.

Mr. Speaker, I also propose to repeal many of the existing provisions that concern the school calendar and instead shift them to the regulations. This is where such detail is typically addressed and it allows for greater flexibility. To support this, first I propose to amend section 163 and replace it with provisions that will introduce the concept of an instructional day. I also propose to set the earliest instructional day as the first day following the Labour Day and the latest instructional day as June 30th.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments will also continue to allow the Minister of Education to set the school year at 200 days or less. However, with the proposed amendments, it would allow for the same number of school days in future years unless it is changed. At present and for the last several years, this has been set at 197 school days.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that boards of education and the Conseil des écoles fransaskoises will continue to set specific timelines for the opening and closing dates of schools. They will also set the school hours of operation and the general schedule of operation for the school year. Boards will also retain the autonomy to allow teachers to begin working earlier to prepare for the school year.

I also propose to repeal section 164 to 167. These sections include provisions on school hours, holidays, vacations, and

variations in the length of the school year. The topics addressed in these sections will now be covered in the regulations. To allow for this, the authority of the Lieutenant Governor in Council will be expanded in the Act to make regulations on these provisions.

To support the development of these regulations, ministry officials have requested input from our education partners. As you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, an opportunity to hear from all of our stakeholders including teachers, boards, and school division executive is vitally important. The partners who will be invited to present recommendations around the regulations are as follows: the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation or the STF; the Saskatchewan School Boards Association or the SSBA; the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents, known as LEADS; and the Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials, known as SASBO.

Mr. Speaker, I have separately last month met with representatives of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association and the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents to discuss the proposed amendments to the school year. And last week I had the opportunity to meet with the STF, LEADS, SASBO, and the SSBA to get their input on this issue as well.

[15:30]

I would like to stress that around school hours, holidays, vacations, and variations in the length of the school year, nothing has been finalized. We are listening and we're going to get input. The process of developing regulations will allow the opportunity to hear from all of the stakeholders. We envision that the regulations will still allow school divisions the flexibility to set their own school year calendar in consultation with teachers, parents, and the local community. Mr. Speaker, with these changes we look to effectively balance the instructional needs of students with the professional development interests of teachers and boards of education.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also proposing a series of additional changes to the Act. With these changes I aim to repeal obsolete provisions, provide some clarification around the new education property tax regime, and support the borrowing process of boards of education. The education council is a dormant ministry committee that has not operated in decades. Because of this I propose to repeal provisions that reference this council. There is also the technology supported revolving fund. It was used to fund the delivery of correspondence courses delivered by the ministry. Boards of education have now been responsible for the delivery of distance education since 2009. As such the fund is no longer required. I propose to repeal provisions that reference the fund.

I also propose merging the two teacher classification and certification boards into one. Through the government's review of agencies, boards, commissions, and committees, it was found that the role and composition of the two boards overlap. This will allow the Teacher Education, Certification, and Classification Board to be established and to establish an appeal forum for those teachers who wish to appeal a certification decision of the ministry. At the present time there is no opportunity for a teacher to appeal a decision to not be issued a

certificate allowing them to teach. This appeal committee will operate similarly to other appeal bodies common to other professional organizations in the province.

Initial consultations on the obsolete provisions and the new teacher board were initiated in the fall of 2009. It included SASBO, LEADS, the STF and SSBA, and both boards. Details on the composition of the new board and the appeals committee will be set out in the teacher certification and classification regulations. The term of the members, vacancies, and membership, what constitutes a quorum, and the expenses will also be addressed in the regulations. The Chair will be appointed by the Minister of Education and is expected to be a senior official of the ministry. We will be developing the regulations and consulting with the existing boards prior to passage of the regulations and implementation of the new board.

I also propose changes to the Act to reflect new copyright laws and tariffs. These changes will allow the Minister of Education to make payments on behalf of the education institutions like boards of education and independent schools to a collective society as defined in the *Copyright Act* Canada. Respect of copyright is encouraged in Saskatchewan schools. Authors, publishers, artists, and other creators are entitled to fair and reasonable compensation when their works are copied for educational purposes, and these amendments provide for that.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, in the 2009 budget the Government of Saskatchewan introduced significant changes for funding the province's education system. We moved forward to achieve a fair balance of the resources allocated to school divisions. We did this by cutting and capping education property taxes and setting province-wide rates for each of the three major property classes — residential, commercial, and agricultural.

As the government, rather than the boards of education, set mill rates for education property taxes, the unique situation in Lloydminster required specific wording to address the tax situation. Legal counsel and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs have noted a deficiency in the existing authority. I propose corrective wording that clarifies the authority for different mill rates to be set on properties within the Lloydminster school divisions. All parties have agreed to the corrective wording.

To ensure that we are in accordance with *The Tabling of Documents Act*, I propose changes that will require boards of education to table their annual reports and financial statements before the Legislative Assembly. The requirement is the same as for our regional health authorities. The information required to be included in the annual report is similar for boards of education and the regional health authorities. With the government now setting province-wide education property tax mill rates instead of individual boards of education, the funding that boards of education receive should be considered as part of the ministry's overall financial report.

Mr. Speaker, I also propose changes that will allow boards of education and the Conseil des écoles fransaskoises to appoint professional auditors when they choose. In the past, the Act prescribed when a board of education was to appoint an auditor. Boards of education are fully aware of the need to appoint an auditor, and we have granted them the discretion to select their

auditor at a time when it is most appropriate for them. The auditor they select will need to be a professional accountant in Saskatchewan and cannot be the chief financial officer for the board in the preceding year or have had a prior contract with the board other than as an auditor.

Mr. Speaker, changes are also required to support school capital projects as a result of changes to the education property tax approach. Government has committed more than \$391.2 million since November of 2007 to move forward 38 major capital projects and about 710 additional smaller school capital projects across the entire province. This represents a record high investment in school infrastructure over a four-year period.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that we recently announced that the government/board share for capital projects is 65/35 share. To support school divisions in meeting their share of capital investments, I propose a number of amendments. First, I propose to remove the requirement for boards of education to obtain approval from the Saskatchewan Municipal Board for loans, and shift the approval process to the Ministry of Education. I also propose to remove the ability of boards of education to issue debentures and establish sinking funds related to borrowing, and instead use the more established means of financial institutions.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we also remove the specific amounts for tendering for capital equipment and vehicles. By setting out the amounts in regulations, we can more easily be adjusted over time. These rates have not been adjusted in a decade. They are less than those prescribed in the New West Partnership Agreement.

I also propose to broaden the terminology used to refer to school facilities to recognize the boards of education operate more than just schools. Examples of this include board offices and transportation or storage buildings.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'm proposing an amendment to retain the Saskatchewan Municipal Board to provide an arm's-length financial oversight of boards of education financial management when required. As a result of the changes to the role of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board with respect to boards of education, a separate statute, *The Education Consequential Amendments Act, 2011* is also being introduced to address the related changes.

Mr. Speaker, internal and external consultations were held on the proposed amendments to the Act. An initial consultation meeting was held with SASBO on April 1st, 2011 to discuss the new financial-related amendments. The organization is generally supportive of the proposed financial- and capital-related amendments. SASBO was also asked to share the proposed amendments with chief financial officers who are their members for comment. The SSBA and LEADS were likewise shared a summary of all of the proposed amendments with opportunities for feedback. The STF was consulted on changes to the Act. They have also indicated to the Ministry that they look forward to providing input on the proposed changes affecting the school year.

The amendments I am bringing forth ensure that the Act is updated to support changes to other legislation, education

taxation, and policy. The amendments on changes to the school year meet the commitment made by the Premier at the start of the school year for students. It will also allow us to go to our education partners — teachers, schools, and boards — to start the conversation on important topics like holidays, vacation, length of the school day, and variations in the length of the school year. I am pleased to move therefore that Bill No. 27, *The Education Amendment Act, 2011* be now read a second time.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Education has moved second reading of Bill No. 27, *The Education Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got about an hour and 20 minutes to speak on this particular Bill. I am looking forward to taking the time necessary to express a lot of the concerns that I have on this particular Bill and we in the opposition have as well, Mr. Speaker. We certainly want to point out that there are many, many difficulties with this particular minister and this Bill and certainly the commitment of that government towards education in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

I notice that she prefaced her comments on the Bill by speaking about the amount of money they're putting into education, Mr. Speaker. And those contracts and that work was started many, many years ago. And we certainly are pleased to see that there are new schools being built and that there is a future for making sure that as many communities are supported in getting some brand new schools as possible. That's what the government's all about, and certainly we want to continue building on that as well.

As the demand increases for new schools, Mr. Speaker, as an official opposition, the NDP aren't going to put a stop to schools that are necessary. And people out there should know that we have supported many school groups that have come forward in the past four years asking for the NDP support and certainly asking us to lobby on their behalf — there has been many cases where we have — and lobby on their behalf in saying, yes, we will support that notion. Because there is no question that some of these schools, or some of these communities that need new schools ought to get new schools, Mr. Speaker. It's simple as that. It has nothing to do with politics. It has everything to do with demand and need and to ensure a good, solid, stable future for education in our province.

So I think one of the things we want to point out is all the projects that are on the list to be achieved and to be built, the NDP would support that. Education is one of our platforms, Mr. Speaker, something that we absolutely support 100 per cent, Mr. Speaker. And what we are not about to do is politicize that process because there is a very rigorous process to determine which schools are going to be built. And there is a criteria based on the condition and the safety of students, based on the number of students, and the list goes on. And there's a number of different groups that also, Mr. Speaker, that also are involved with deciding which schools should be built. I'm assuming that the SSBA's involved. I'm assuming that STF may have some role. I'm assuming obviously that the government has a role as well. So there's a number of groups that would be involved

with deciding which schools would be built.

Now after all that consultation and the schools are determined, and the fact is that a school is warranted in one of the richest neighbourhoods of any of the larger centres, as an NDP Party we would support that because we would respect the fact that there was a process in place, there was fairness, there was criteria, and there was certainly co-operation. Now, Mr. Speaker, that I think is really important to tell the people out there that it is not only the Saskatchewan Party that is making the commitment towards education and building these new schools. The NDP would honour those commitments, Mr. Speaker, because it's the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker. It is the right thing to do.

Now the minister can chirp from her chair saying, well why didn't you do them? The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, we never enjoyed the wealth that they had. We haven't enjoyed the wealth that they currently have right now, Mr. Speaker, and I can almost guarantee you, Mr. Speaker, that we would've put more money into education had we had the money that they have, Mr. Speaker, instead of spending it on their friends and certainly their business partners, Mr. Speaker.

So I'll point out that, in reference to the school system, we applaud the commitment towards the construction of new schools. It is great. It is something that we fundamentally believe in and is one of the basic planks in what the NDP stand for, so rest assured that we are going to support the continued construction of new schools. It doesn't matter where they are; we support that notion that education, investment into education is absolutely critical to the future of our province. And we would applaud that investment, and we'd ask for more, Mr. Speaker, because it's the right thing to do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've often maintained that when you look at the relationship of the partners — and I go back to the premise of this particular Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker — the fact that the minister said, we consulted . . . And they like using that word consulted. And people out there know there's a difference between we consulted and we got agreement, versus the notion, we consulted. There's a huge difference.

[15:45]

Because I know STF was not happy with this government. They were not happy because the first time in 78 years, they had a strike. First time in 78 years, we've seen thousands, hundreds if not thousands of teachers out here that were protesting the fact that, as the minister likes to refer to the elephant in the room, where there was no discussion on the education funding model. And there was nothing of that sort, no support towards the teachers, Mr. Speaker.

And at the end of the day, when you throw out the fact that we're going to invest so many hundreds of millions into schools, we accept that. But in the meantime, you can't treat the association, the federation of teachers, and the teachers themselves, you can't treat them like the manner in which you treated them and still expect them to respect the fact that you're putting more money into building new schools.

New schools are great if they have great staff, if they have

adequate staff, and they have a full complement of staff, Mr. Speaker. And that's another basic, fundamental principle that the NDP support, Mr. Speaker, is that you can't just have buildings. You've got to have the staff and a full complement of staff to support that. And I think overall, whether it's the SSBA or whether it's the STF, I think they would give this minister and this government a failing grade, a failing grade of how they've handled education, all the while just pushing up for all the public to see, oh we're putting all this money into new schools.

It's good. It's good they're building new schools, as I mentioned at the outset. But there are other issues that you've got to address. And this Bill really highlights, really highlights their non-respect for the teaching industry, their non-respect for the people that are involved with educating our young people, and it shows it in spades, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And one of the things that really, really struck me in this particular Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the financial oversight that the minister alluded to towards the end of her comments of these boards. Now I'm trying to figure out, Mr. Speaker, what is the role of that financial oversight committee that she spoke about. Does she not trust the board of education, the people that make the decisions, how do we want to spend our budget? Don't you trust them to do their own kinds of work? And I would suggest that if you put a financial oversight committee in place, that means you don't trust them.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think one of the points, when you start talking about number of measures in place to watch what the school boards are doing, it begins to make a lot of people out there become very concerned of how this government is treating our educators and our board of directors that support the educators in teaching our young people and making sure they're taught well, Mr. Speaker.

Now one of the things that I think is important is that when the minister talks about respect — I'll only give her one good example today, Mr. Speaker, as she's chirping from her chair — when she talks about respect, she . . . This announcement to change the school year, to change the school year, it came in the middle of the campaign, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And she had a Bill drafted to bring into the Assembly before she met with the SSBA. So the question is, what kind of respectful relationship is that?

Your leader makes a commitment during the election to change the school year, as the Bill indicates here, and then you go ahead and draft a Bill and you bring the Bill to the Assembly here. And then you go meet with the SSBA after the fact. Nobody, nobody was consulted on this. So when you do that, when you do that, people don't like that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If you're a teacher and all of a sudden this was thrown on your lap, people will begin to say, why are we shown such disrespect? That's the common theme that I'm picking up, Mr. Speaker.

So I would point out, when you have a Bill drafted to change a school year, no consultation, no respect for the teachers, no respect for the school boards out there that have had, that plan all these things out, and then you propose, you draft up a Bill with all these amendments . . . It's a fairly big Bill. It's a fairly

thick Bill. This wasn't drafted overnight, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This took maybe weeks. And the minister met with the SSBA a week ago and said okay, well we had our consultation. That's the fundamental point that they make a lot of times to the media, to the opposition, is why consult with us after you've made a decision? That just doesn't sit well with a lot of folks within the SSBA and certainly amongst the teachers themselves, Mr. Speaker.

Now I look at the school boards, the school boards themselves. The government said, okay we don't want you guys setting mill rates or collecting land taxes. We're going to stop you there, but we're going to fund you; we're going to fund you as our grand commitment to education. But they're not going to tell you what that funding is till after 2011. And the minister's comments to the SSBA was, it's about the elephant in the room. That's how she basically spoke about the fact that everybody needs to know what this funding model's about, but she's not going to talk about it. But she did say there is an elephant in the room, but I'm not going to talk about it.

Well it's nice to notice the elephant. But the whole meaning behind saying there's an elephant in the room is you want to talk about it. And that's typical of the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, is they will talk about something that's very apparent, but there's no solution and no leadership to it and no resolution. That's what it's all about, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So all that stuff catches up to you after a while. It'll catch up, Mr. Speaker. We on this opposition are just going to simply be patient, and we will wait. Obviously we've been given the instructions to wait, and we shall. We've been given the mandate to sit here with nine members for the next four years, and we shall. And we shall, Mr. Speaker. We shall because obviously, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day this thing will come around again. What goes around comes around, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And on education, on the education front, you can flag the fact that you're spending 2 or \$300 million on new schools — that was a done deal; we support that — but in the meantime, you're treating all other aspects of the education system with disrespect, and that goes down from setting the school year in the middle of an election and drafting a Bill before you even sat down with the SSBA, Mr. Speaker. And that's what's fundamentally wrong with a lot of the Bills that are being brought forward. They're done out of sync, they're done in disrespect, and they're also done with, I think, malice at times, Mr. Speaker.

And that's unfortunate. That is very unfortunate that the people of Saskatchewan can expect that from a government, Mr. Speaker, because there's a lot of school boards and a lot of teachers that are just not happy with the manner in which they have been treated.

So you look at the future of the school divisions — everything from the oversight that the minister spoke about, the fact that she doesn't want to talk about the elephant in the room but she notices it, doesn't want to talk about the teachers' strike, doesn't want to talk about the fact that they can't set mill rates in order to collect property taxes to adequately meet the needs of their school division, that they can't set the school year, and

they can't figure out their funding model — and these are our critical partners in education.

They begin to ask, what is their future role with this minister? What is their future role with this government? Why even sit in these school divisions if you have no power, no ability, no respect? And the bad thing is when that begins, when the whole local control begins to deteriorate, Mr. Speaker, when it begins to deteriorate where all of a sudden the local people are saying okay, okay Minister of Education, you don't want to respect us on all these fronts. We'll walk away. You figure it out. We'll walk away from that responsibility and you figure it out.

And what happens? You can see a collapse of a lot of the rural school systems. You're going to see a lot of the teachers become discouraged in that industry because (a) they're disrespected, and (b) they're not paid properly. You're going to start seeing administrators leaving for other fields of opportunity. And you're going to start seeing the education system itself begin to collapse, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Why? Because you don't respect the local decision makers. You corner them, and then you don't deal with their issues, and furthermore you hurt their staff.

And you go bang, bang, bang, bang. You start taking shots to the jaw about five or six times, Mr. Speaker, from this particular government, you begin to wonder well who is our friend there? And people will quickly realize — and they will realize; it'll take them time but they will — that these guys aren't friends of education. They want to do away with the local school boards. They want to do away with any autonomy and control that these boards have. They want to do away with any kind of control by other local groups over their mandate, Mr. Speaker.

And after a while, they're insisting that they have this great mandate. That will be the death knell of that particular party because, Mr. Speaker, people watch very carefully, people watch very carefully how they handle that mandate. And if they sense arrogance and if they sense the fact that they're going to take over everything, they will send them a message. And you will start seeing that message being delivered fairly soon.

Now I know SSBA and STF, I know a lot of these groups and organizations are watching. They're a bit weary. They're a bit weary of all the fights they've been having because they begin to get concerned saying, well why am I fighting with my own government? Why are we fighting with these guys? They're supposed to represent us. And what is their agenda in having these fights with us? What is their agenda? And that's the problem. They can't figure it out.

What is the endgame for this minister and education? Like what is it? What is their endgame? Are they going to do away with the school divisions altogether? Are they going to determine whether they will set the future for teachers' salaries? Are they going to remove all local autonomy from all boards? Are they going to take away the local decision-making ability of different leaders and different people? That's the question they have, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is the question they have.

So I'm going to say to the minister that the notes that you have brought forward, the comments that you have made, I can tell

you right now with STF and SSBA, not speaking to any of their members, that they have one thing that they would say to you, Madam Minister, today. They're not going to compromise their principles on their role. They're going to hold steadfast. They're going to hold steadfast, and they're going to stay the course on what they think is a principled position that they have on a number of fronts when they challenge your government. They are not going to blink, Mr. Speaker. And that's going to be their message to you eventually.

Right now at this stage of the election cycle, it's not a great time, but that time will come. That time will come, Mr. Speaker. And they can laugh and they can have their fun now, but eventually, as I mentioned at the outset, what goes around comes around. And I think the Sask Party will soon find out, will soon find out that arrogance is not something that they should use in their benches today. And ignorance of some of the challenges that some of our people feel out there is not another thing, is not another thing that they should be sitting on because that is something, that is something that people of Saskatchewan will quickly certainly send a message. And if they're displeased with this government, they'll get the message, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They'll get that message.

So I look at again some of the comments that they made, and we just pick up the concepts. As the minister rattles off a few probably useful tools and maybe a few good ideas, she'll throw in another five or six bad ideas. But people won't pay attention to some of the small housekeeping items that she thinks are great news for the education system. What she will do is bring along all the doom and gloom that people are suspecting she's going to do, and she'll try and dress it up to be as positive as possible.

And that's why she uses the wording, we consulted. There's a big, significant difference between we consulted versus we reached an agreement, Mr. Speaker. There is a big difference between a forced agreement and agreement that is applauded by all parties. And I can tell you right now, based on that minister's experience in education, that she has not done the work necessary to get the educators, the school boards, and the school system properly positioned to take advantage of this economy that's in place now. She has not done the work that is necessary, Mr. Speaker. And that's why I think that as an opposition, this Bill, this single Bill, *An Act to amend The Education Act* is going to be receiving a lot of attention.

And I can tell the teachers or the educators or the boards that are out there today that, be patient, you know, and give us the advice that is necessary. We will listen to that advice. And we know that if we're going to build a brave new Saskatchewan, we need local boards of education in place. We need regional boards. We need the French community. We need the Catholic school. We need all these schools and organizations to be part and to be architects of a brave new education concept for Saskatchewan. We need their advice. We need their input, and we need their guidance. And, Mr. Speaker, as long as we have that and they can give us that information, we can fight back as best we can, given our nine members.

But guess what? Four years moves along fairly quickly. And, Mr. Speaker, there will be a time and an opportunity to judge this minister and that government's commitment to education

from the educators' perspective and the administrators of the education systems. And that time always comes every four years. So I tell them today, enjoy. Laugh it off and have fun, but what goes around comes around. And it's a matter of being patient, being pragmatic, being intelligent of what needs to be done.

[16:00]

And eventually things will come our way where we don't see this minister propose these kind of Acts in the future because it is absolutely disrespectful to all the people that she's supposed to represent as the minister, Mr. Speaker. Whether it's the teachers' assistants that were fired last year or whether the first-time teachers' strike in 78 years or they're taking away the taxing powers of the local boards, it is one shot after another.

And I can remember sitting in Meadow Lake one day, and the member from Meadow Lake brought forward . . . Somebody dropped off a letter at one of the houses I was building saying, it was not my decision to let go of the teachers' assistants; it was the school board's choice. Now why would he do that, send a letter to the households in his hometown? And the reason why . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh yes, there was a letter. I seen that letter; I kept it in fact. And I'll try and find it for you. But he blamed the school divisions for the teachers' aides being fired.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, why would he do that? Why would he do that? Because he wants to avoid the responsibility of the tough decision that the school boards have to make. He placed all the onus on the school boards making that decision when in fact he knew, he knew that the education cuts to that school division would result in the teachers' assistants being cut because they targeted teacher aides. That's what they did. So when they lose all their jobs, you're confused. Next you get a letter saying, it wasn't me. That's not leadership, Mr. Speaker.

Now I told him I had a copy of that letter. I'll try and find it. I don't know where it is, but I do have a copy, and I will present it to him. Now the minister today is denying he ever wrote that letter and had it delivered. I'd like him to hear him say that. I notice there's a bit of silence over there, Mr. Speaker, because that letter was drafted, and I did read it. And I'll undertake to get that letter, and I will try and present it to this Assembly if I could find it.

But that's my point. That's my point, Mr. Speaker. That's my point. You can't set school years in the middle of an election. You can't consult after the Bill has been drafted. You can't corner the school divisions. Because what happens at the end of the day? They're going to get angry with you. They're going to make sure that they don't forget how you were treated. And that's exactly what I think Bill No. 27 is all about, Mr. Speaker. It's a continuing onslaught on the school divisions. It's a continuing onslaught on the teachers. It's a continuing onslaught on local groups and organizations that support the school divisions.

And all the while the minister keeps talking about 307 million in new schools. Well, we support that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We support that. We're really happy that's being done, and we wouldn't change it. We wouldn't change it because the bottom

line is that list of schools, that list of schools was . . . Who decides who builds these schools is a group of people that are committed to education. Now one thing that the government does do on a constant basis, and we done it as well, is we incorporated other people to help us decide which school should be built. That's the fair way to do it, which schools should be built.

And that agreement is a good agreement. You keep that agreement because you have good advice. You have stakeholders and you have some really solid people that'll do the right thing and build schools where they should be built, where the demand is, where the safety of the school is a problem, where the student population demands it. That's how you do it.

But we need to stop talking about the fact that this is an agreement put in place. These people decide where the schools are built. It's a co-operative effort. And the money's there. Good. Leave that alone. But let's deal with these other issues. But you notice the minister keeps going back to that, oh, we're building more schools. Well come on, you've said that about 30 times already. I think we get it. The schools are being built. You know, we think they're being built. So build them already. Build them already. Let's stop talking about it; build them already.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also had the opportunity to talk to a few teachers — no names. And I went to a meeting in Buffalo Narrows and the Premier just happened to be flying into Buffalo Narrows to meet with their local candidate. And as they were walking through the school, he mentioned, oh, Buffalo Narrows needs a new school. And people were quite happy with that. But then the question I had after that, as I said, well is he prepared to put the Twin Lakes school of Buffalo Narrows above all the others that had been identified as the priority? Is he prepared to do that? And I didn't hear no answer at all.

So Buffalo Narrows needs a new school because Buffalo Narrows deserves a new school, not because it's politically advantageous to build it. It should be built because they need the new one, not because we had a visit by the Premier to the community.

Valley View in Beauval needs to be replaced because these are aging facilities, and they need to make sure that the schools are safe. Mr. Speaker, there are many things in the province that need attention. And instead of the minister's focusing on that attention to increase the amount of school capital so we can build more schools for the future of our province, she talks about cornering school divisions on accountability, reducing their role to the tax so they can have a full complement of staff including teachers' assistants. And they should also stop bullying SSBA around by setting school years without their permission and even prior knowledge.

And that's the point, Mr. Speaker. It's not about the Bills that we sit up here and we argue about. It's about the intent. It's about the treatment. It's about the respect. And that's why we say we need to take the time to study the Bill to see what the residual effects of some these Bills are, and these changes and the rules they're putting in place, to understand what the impacts are. And that's why it's necessary to take the two or

three months that is required to really understand the Bill and reach out to the stakeholders, Mr. Speaker.

I have a lot more I want to say on this, and I can go on for quite some time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I can, but at this stage of the game, Mr. Speaker, I know we have other Bills to deal with. So therefore I'll adjourn debate on this particular Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 27, *The Education Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 28 — *The Education Consequential Amendments Act, 2011*

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move the second reading of Bill No. 28, *The Education Consequential Amendments Act, 2011*. The proposed amendments to *The Municipal Board Act* are consequential to the changes proposed in *The Education Amendment Act, 2011*.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, in the 2009 budget the Government of Saskatchewan introduced significant changes for funding the province's education system. We moved forward to achieve a fairer balance of resources allocated to school divisions. We did this by cutting and capping education property taxes and setting province-wide rates for each of the three major property classes: residential, commercial, and agricultural.

The changes to the education property tax approach resulted in clarifications to how we manage funding education infrastructure projects. Mr. Speaker, you will recall that we recently announced the government/board share for capital projects is a 65/35 per cent share. To support school divisions in meeting their share of capital investments, I propose repealing sections of *The Municipal Board Act* that require boards of education to apply to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board for authorization to pursue application for loans. Local property owners are no longer affected by school board capital project costs. Instead the cost of servicing capital debt will be funded by a dollar-for-dollar increase in the operating grant paid to boards of education. In recognition of this, I will shift the approval process to the Ministry of Education. The ability of boards of education to issue debentures and establish sinking funds will be removed as they will be encouraged to use more established borrowing means such as financial institutions.

The Saskatchewan Municipal Board will still continue to provide an arm's-length financial oversight of boards of education financial management when required. For example when warranted, the Saskatchewan Municipal Board may make orders requiring boards of education to resolve financial difficulties or, when appropriate, appoint an administrator to oversee the board. Upon request of the Minister of Education, the Saskatchewan Municipal Board may also conduct inquiries

into the fiscal management of a board of education.

Mr. Speaker, I also propose repealing references to the board . . . to the educational council in the universities of Regina and Saskatoon statutes. The education council is a dormant Ministry of Education committee that has not operated for decades.

The Saskatchewan Municipal Board and Municipal Affairs were consulted on the proposed amendments and are supportive of the changes. An initial consultation meeting was held with the Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials, or SASBO, on April 1st, 2011. This meeting was held to discuss all new financial- and capital-related amendments. SASBO was also asked to share the proposed amendments with chief financial officers who are members for comment. The organization is generally supportive of these amendments.

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association and League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents were likewise shared a summary of all of the proposed amendments with opportunities for feedback.

The policy direction of the provisions of *The Municipal Board Act* will continue to apply to municipalities and other local authorities.

The amendments I am bringing forth ensure that legislation is updated to reflect new processes for boards of education to pursue application for loans. This is important to address as there have been significant investments in school infrastructure since November of 2007.

I know the member opposite loves to hear how the Saskatchewan Party has, this Saskatchewan government has committed more than 391.2 million to forward 38 major capital projects and about 710 similar small capital projects across our province which — he loves to hear it — represents a record high investment of school infrastructure over a four-year period. Ensuring these boards of education have a clearly defined process for pursuing the application of loans is important in supporting this investment. So I am pleased to move therefore that Bill No. 28, the Saskatchewan consequential amendments Act, 2011 be now read for a second time.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Education has moved second reading of Bill No. 28, *The Education Consequential Amendments Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I'm pleased to stand today in the Assembly to offer our points and our complementary points as the minister talked about more debt for the school divisions. Certainly you look at *The Education Act* that we spoke about earlier, that this certainly is in line with what we think is another further challenge to many of the school divisions, that she's now allowing them to assume more debt and make more loans.

And that's exactly what the problem is, Mr. Speaker, is how . . . But the question that we have is, how many loans have any of the school divisions taken prior to this government coming into power? We need to know those figures. Is it going to be increased? Obviously the local school divisions and the local

communities need to come up with some of their own money if they want to have a new school built. And they want to see some local commitment. Fair enough. But you know, if you don't allow the school divisions to be able to give them taxing powers so they can raise their own money through the tax base as they do with say, for example, some of the hospitals that are being proposed . . .

I think it's in Shellbrook, I think, where they have a levy on some of the properties around the community. I think it's \$150 a month that they allow them to . . . The RMs I think are collecting this and that's their contribution towards building a brand new hospital in Shellbrook. And I certainly wish Shellbrook and the area great luck in getting that facility because obviously they would need it and they would want it.

Now do the school divisions have the same option here? And based on the fact that the minister wants to hold what I think is the line on property taxes, they've stripped the school divisions of the opportunity to tax property, you know, within their school division. But hold it, we're going to save you, is what this Bill is about. We're going to allow you to assume more debt. You can borrow more money.

Now again out of that \$391 million that the minister alluded to, how much of that would be covered under this Bill, under that debt? Is it 35 per cent of it? Is it a 35 per cent? That's the questions that we need to know. Because as you look at some of the information that we got on education in general, if you think you're going to have trouble meeting some of the commitments today, the Sask Party are going to have trouble meeting some of the commitments.

Look, we have over 5,000 new students in the province and yet we have a number of teachers losing their jobs. The teaching staff have been pushed down. The educational assistants, as I mentioned, they got rid of them. And there's also a number of students that have intensive needs. So you combine all those factors in place. That also adds to the challenge of educating our young people, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[16:15]

This all adds challenges, but the solution again for that minister and the Saskatchewan Party is, guess what? You can borrow money. You know, and how is a school division that have problems in making sure that the full complement of staff, they're making sure that they have the autonomy to do these things, to make sure that they make all the adjustments to changing the school year, to making sure that they have the proper staff to maintain their facility, and to also hire the staff, and then to look at the increase in students, look at the special needs that are out there, and given all those factors, not having a funding agreement, to add that on top of the burden?

And now, guess what? You need to go find some money. We'll let you borrow money. We'll give you the authority to borrow more money. How could you borrow money from a school division that has no taxing powers and has no funding formula in place? How could that, how could that happen? How are they going to pay that? Are they going to chip in at their next staff meeting? Are they going to do fundraising, bake sales and raffles and that kind of thing? That's the thing we . . . That's the

point we have to ask them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is, how is it that you can put all these opportunities, you disguise them as opportunities when they're really challenges?

And did the minister consult on that front? Did the minister consult on that front? Did she say to the SSBA, hey folks, guess what, we're going to let you guys borrow money now. And, yes okay, but yes, the borrowing of the money, how are we going to pay that back? Well we're not going to let you tax any more. You can't tax any more. And we're not going to give you your funding agreement. And the teachers are at this percentage, and we agreed to that. We're going to hold the line that you guys don't start charging people property tax.

But on the other side, when you talk about hospitals, yes go ahead and collect 150 bucks a month from each of the people that are staying in these RMs. So why is it good on one front and is bad on the other front? It's simply because we think that this government does not know what they are doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that is the problem. That is the problem.

So on the education model, just from looking at some of these notes and hearing what the people are saying, we know that there's a lot more information out there, that there's going to be a lot of organizing to deal with this particular issue, and there's going to be a lot of agony amongst the school divisions in trying to figure this baby out. And that's exactly what we meant when we said, don't mess it up. Don't mess it up. Don't bring your philosophies in there, the conservative philosophies to try and figure out what the future of Saskatchewan is, because Saskatchewan is a much more caring province to say, everybody on their own. We need to begin to help each other out and build the economy based on, again as I mentioned, respect, and making sure that we have decent facilities, decent homes, and a bright future for everyone, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a bright future for everyone.

And in order to achieve that, you've got to embrace two or three groups, and one of them is educating the future, the future leaders of our province called students. And this government has totally disrespected those associations and those groups of people. They have ignored the teachers, and they haven't given them no resources to operate yet recognizing their pressures. And now to say as a *coup de grâce*, guess what, you can borrow more money. So I don't know how the school divisions are going to borrow more money when they don't have any money, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is a pretty tough order to fill.

So obviously we have a lot more questions and comments on this particular Bill. And given the time frame, Mr. Speaker, of at least two or three months before we are back in the Assembly to bring forward our other debates and other issues, I want to point out that we will be back on this Bill, and there'll be a lot more pointed discussions on the challenge of education in the province of Saskatchewan afforded to the people by those guys across the way. And that's not what the people of Saskatchewan envisioned when they gave this government the opportunity to govern. I think that time is coming to an end, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think that arrogance and being comfortable in those chairs will soon catch up. And that time is coming, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So on that note I move that we adjourn debate on this Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 28, *The Education Consequential Amendments Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 21 — *The Commissioners for Oaths Act, 2011*

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 21, *The Commissioners for Oaths Act, 2011*. This Act modernizes Saskatchewan's legislation for appointing commissioners for oaths. It removes provisions that are outdated or unnecessary and updates language.

Mr. Speaker, commissioners for oaths are the officials that administer oaths, affirmations, and statutory declarations for a variety of uses in Saskatchewan. In effect, when a person makes an oath, affirmation, or declaration for a Commissioner for Oaths, it has the same effect as if that individual had given sworn testimony in court.

Mr. Speaker, *The Commissioners for Oaths Act* dates back to the 1940s and has very few changes that have been needed since that time. In fact the Act has not been comprehensively reviewed in many years. After an ad hoc amendment that was passed in 2010 to correct a deficiency dealing with military officers, we decided to conduct a thorough review.

Mr. Speaker, the ministry has gone through a review of its processes related to appointments for commissioners for oaths and has found and corrected several inefficiencies. However, more can be done with legislative amendments. This Bill removes the distinction between appointments for commissioners for oaths "in and for Saskatchewan" and commissioners for oaths "without Saskatchewan." We find these concepts to be unnecessary in today's mobile society. In removing the distinction, we are following the lead established by other provinces such as British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario. The Bill removes the requirement to be a Canadian citizen or a British subject as a qualification for appointment. These concepts are outdated and in fact likely violate the equality provisions of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation also provides a modernized appointment process with as much possible being done online and electronically. It also introduces the concept of more rigorous screening of applicants. Regulations will enable training and evaluation processes before an appointment is issued.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Mr. Speaker, this Act will update the designation of persons and classes of persons who are commissioners for oaths without having to apply for an appointment. These people are commissioners simply by virtue of their status or office.

For example, Mr. Speaker, lawyers, members of the Legislative Assembly, court officials, and senior military officers have long

been recognized in legislation throughout Canada as commissioners for oaths without needing to receive an appointment. Provincial court judges need the specific ability to administer affidavits, declarations, and affirmations. Also there are other groups whose members often apply for appointments and for whom fee exemptions have previously been granted under the regulations. These include police officers and government officials. By designating these people as commissioners “by virtue of their status or office,” it avoids the bureaucratic waste of them applying for appointments and my ministry processing these many applications.

You will note, Mr. Speaker, the types of government officials who qualify under this provision will be designated in the regulations. My officials are conducting in-depth consultations with the ministries to determine which officials actually need to be commissioners for oaths. Further, Mr. Speaker, these designations will terminate as soon as the individual ceases to hold the office or have the particular status that allows him or her to administer oaths.

We feel that time is right to update our commissioners for oaths legislation and that is why, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of Bill 21, *The Commissioners for Oaths Act, 2011*.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General has moved second reading of Bill No. 21, *The Commissioners for Oaths Act, 2011*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m again pleased to rise today to give our insight on this Bill. Obviously we paid very close attention to this Bill, and we want to make sure that the minister was quite clear as to the purpose of the Bill and what his intentions were.

So, Mr. Speaker, I was quite pleased when the information came forward, when the minister indicated that the MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] were not going to be, the power to be acting as a commissioner of oaths was not being taken away from the MLAs. And that was quite important because in my office we often get people that come to see us and they give us, they ask us to sign for them as a commissioner of oaths. And it is really a valuable service to many people in my area, primarily for two reasons. Number one is they don’t have access to lawyers, and of course the more prevalent reason is that they don’t have access to, you know, to the money to hire lawyers.

So I think the Commissioner for Oaths, in terms of recognizing that there are independent officers — whether they’re police officers or whether they’re judges or MLAs or they’re in the Canadian Armed Forces or whether they’re a member of the courts — that these people are out there in the public, and they really serve a valuable amount of people that need a Commissioner for Oaths to witness the signing of their documents. So I’m pleased that that option is still there for a lot of people.

Now obviously the question that we have is what is the purpose of the Bill. Is this simply a housekeeping Bill? Is there other groups or organizations that have asked to be given this

privilege? And when I say it’s a privilege, people come up to us and I tell them very carefully that I’m not going to commission your oath here if I don’t see you sign the document. You’ve got to sign it in front of me. And once they’ve signed, then of course I will sign. So it’s a privilege to be able to help people and it’s also, you know, you have to be careful as well.

So when the minister talks about the amendments to this particular Act, what is the impact? What was the need behind this Bill? And is it going to be a better service to the people of Saskatchewan overall?

And again if you have about 200 people in one town that can actually act as a Commissioner for Oaths, you know that’s probably helpful, you know, in my area. But in certain other areas, all of a sudden you have 6 or 700, it becomes kind of a problem because if every Tom, Dick, and Harry can be a Commissioner for Oaths, it becomes a bit of a circus.

So I just want to make sure that we find out what the intent of the Bill is, why it’s being proposed at this time. Again what consultation did the minister have? And while they may be identifying some of his powers to a point, I’m quite pleased that at the very least that he’s recognized the independence of the MLAs to continue serving the role of Commissioner for Oaths as a service to many of our constituents. So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I would adjourn debate on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The member for Athabasca has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 21, *The Commissioners for Oaths Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 22 — *The Commissioners for Oaths Consequential Amendment Act, 2011/Loi de 2011 portant modification corrélative à la loi intitulée The Commissioners for Oaths Act, 2011*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 22, *The Commissioners for Oaths Consequential Amendment Act, 2011*. This Bill goes hand in hand with *The Commissioners for Oaths Act, 2011*. That Bill consequently amends two other Acts.

This one, which is bilingual, amends a bilingual Act, *The Evidence Act*. Mr. Speaker, in all of the consequential amendments, the only item being changed is the reference to commissioners for oaths, in and for, I emphasize, Saskatchewan, or commissioners for oaths, emphasis on the word, without Saskatchewan, as the case may be.

In the case of the bilingual amendments, Mr. Speaker, *The Evidence Act* currently permits affidavits to be sworn outside Saskatchewan for use in Saskatchewan courts by a Commissioner for Oaths, emphasis on the word, without Saskatchewan.

As a result of the change in *The Commissioners for Oaths Act, 2011* that eliminates the distinction between appointments in and for and appointments without Saskatchewan, the English and French versions of this Act are being changed to refer to Commissioner for Oaths for Saskatchewan without reference to “in and for” or “without.”

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of Bill No. 22, *The Commissioners for Oaths Consequential Amendment Act, 2011*.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved second reading of Bill No. 22, *The Commissioners for Oaths Consequential Amendment Act, 2011*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I would point out that this is a fairly straightforward Bill. I think we made our points on the Bill previously, that this has some connect. And certainly from our perspective, as always we will look at the Bill and continue seeing if there's any connection with the original Bill, for this is certainly a complementary Bill. So we will certainly again seek advice from a number of groups that may give us advice on this particular Bill and the other Bills attached to it, and we'll certainly have the opportunity to debate them as time goes on. So on that point, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on this Bill.

[16:30]

The Speaker: — The member for Athabasca has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 22, *The Commissioners for Oaths Consequential Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 23 — *The Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act, 2011*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move second reading of Bill No. 23, *The Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act, 2011*. These amendments are aimed at improving workplace health and safety in the province by supporting the Government of Saskatchewan's goal of eliminating all work-related injuries and illnesses.

Before commenting on the proposed legislation, I would like to offer my thanks to the members of the Occupational Health and Safety Council for their important work and to the broad spectrum of business and labour stakeholders who participated in the consultations on changes to the Act. I would also like to thank the staff of the ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety for their input throughout this process and for their contribution in making workplaces right across the province safer and healthier.

We are seeing positive results from both targeted public

education campaigns on safety and stepped-up enforcement measures. There has been a 572 per cent increase in the number of occupational health and safety prosecutions between 2007 and '08 and 2010 and '11. Occupational Health and Safety has also increased the number of workplace inspections it has conducted each year since 2006 and 2007. In fact there was a 34 per cent increase in the number of inspections in last fiscal year compared to '06-07. As a result, the time loss workplace injury rate in Saskatchewan dropped 22 per cent between 2007 and 2011.

In spite of that improvement, Saskatchewan still has the second highest workplace injury rate in the country. Each year about 40,000 injury claims are made with to the Workers' Compensation Board. This is simply unacceptable. Workplace injuries can impose a profound emotional and financial toll on victims and their families and friends and on their communities and the places that they work. We must do more to reach everyone's goal of Mission: Zero — no workplace injuries, no workplace deaths. It is with that in mind that I support these amendments to *The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993*.

This legislation will enhance the duties of employers, supervisors, and suppliers as they relate to occupational health and safety. It will create a duty for prescribed owners to designate a prime contractor and for that prime contractor to coordinate site safety at work sites where there are multiple employers or self-employed persons. In other words, every owner must take care to ensure those that they hire are competent and take action when non-compliance with *The Occupational Health and Safety Act* comes to their attention.

This legislation will establish procedures related to the creation and greater effectiveness of occupational health committees and health and safety programs. The amendments further require employers and other parties to provide training and supervision of employees, as well as maintenance of equipment to ensure the safety of all workers.

On the enforcement side, the legislation will increase the investigative authority for occupational health officers in the course of their duties. In addition the amendments call for an increase in the maximum fines and range of penalties for occupational health and safety violations. These changes will serve as a significant deterrent to ensure that people will follow the Act and are consistent with the best practices from other jurisdictions.

In fact it is a fact that over 500,000 days of productive work are lost each year in Saskatchewan and annual claim costs exceed \$200 million. If together we are able to improve safety practices, it will lead to cost savings as a result of reduced workload injuries and increased overall workplace productivity.

The amendments support the Government of Saskatchewan and its partners' efforts to improve safety practices and standards in all sectors to reduce workplace injuries and increase workplace productivity. They also reinforce Saskatchewan's perspective that it is the responsibility and effort of workplaces, not government, that is the key to prevention of occupational injury and ailments. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of Bill No. 23, *The Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act, 2011*.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General has moved second reading of Bill No. 23, *The Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act, 2011*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm again pleased to stand today to certainly speak about the minister's Bill. And any time you look at the amendments of *The Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act, 2011*, Mr. Speaker, it's important that we pay attention.

The reason why it's important that we pay attention because every year in the Assembly we stand up and we have a motion of silence for people that may have lost their lives on the job but more so as well, those people whose family were affected as a result of their loss of life. And it's really a difficult, difficult moment for many, many people. And it's always nice and I feel great when we take that time in the Assembly here to have that moment of silence of the people that may have passed while they're doing their job. And it's always a moment that we take time to think of that family, think of that person. And it's always quite a difficult time when you hear some of the names, all the people being named. And you think, you start thinking of them. And half the time you don't know where they're from, but you know that there is a great loss of that particular family, and you can say a silent prayer. And it's always something that I enjoy doing here in the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the comment of Mission: Zero. That's something that I think that the government always has to keep in the forefront. Because obviously if you want to have no workplace injuries, that's the standard we should all adopt. That's the standard that we should certainly keep in mind because as I mentioned at the outset, is if we have one death, it's one death too many. If we have injuries in any workplace, it's obviously something that we don't want to see happen. But we know it happens, as you have construction and as you have a number of other things that are occurring in the province, you know that there are risks to workers and people in general.

Mr. Speaker, I noticed that the information that we got is there was some consultation with different groups on *The Occupational Health and Safety Act*. And I think that consultation is always valuable. We've had so many people give us information as to what the challenges were in their workplace, and it's always great to have those people come forward. And it's always greater is if you could listen to some of the advice that has been brought forward, and it's something that you could certainly learn from.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I looked at . . . One of the examples I could certainly think about today is that when we toured the potash mine, I'm not sure which mine it was, but as we went down the shaft — this was a couple years ago — we went a long ways down. I think it was about 3,500 feet. And anyway as we went down the shaft, we talked about what would happen if we have a collapse. Even though the potash is supposed to be a stable rock, the mine shaft is stable, what would happen if you had a collapse? You know, what would happen?

And I guess some of the occupational health and safety rules is that you have to have these life cabins where you can actually have workers survive up to seven days with water and food and

all the safety things within that trailer that's underground. And I understand that's one of things that they had put in place and were putting in place. And they explained the safety features — that if there is a collapse and there is no escape from that mine shaft, that at the very least the workers would have their lives spared, and they'd have a place that they could go and survive until they're actually . . . help comes.

Now as we spoke about that during our tour, I found that actually pretty cool because you have workers down there, and you have people that have families and children and so on and so forth. And even though the rock is stable, at least you had a backup plan in the event that a major accident occurred and then you're cut off from escaping the mine.

Now I can remember that there was reference to another mine collapse in the country at the same time. Now I'm not certain, again I'm just doing this from my memory, I'm not certain if this accident happened shortly after or before that, but there was a loss a life. There was quite a few miners that did perish in that mine collapse. And the question that you have to ask is that, were the same standards applied to that mine as the province of, as our province did? And to this day, I don't know if that was the case.

But I can tell you that I sure felt a lot better after that tour of that potash mine because it really reaffirmed to me that the workers that were down in that shaft had some input as to what they thought were good safety measures, and the safety measures were put in place. And that really, I think that people of Saskatchewan should know, that was really something that was very special to me and certainly to our government at the time.

So I think as we look at *The Occupational Health and Safety Act* and the minister alluded to the fact that he's had consultation, that is very important to know. And because there is so many people out there that give you some valuable advice, that you ought to incorporate that valuable advice into some of the work that you're doing on these Bills.

The other point I would raise, Mr. Speaker, is that the auditor also spoke about the fact that there were infractions that were increased under this government's watch. And while the infractions were noted, the cause of the infractions was not investigated further. I think that was the gist of what the auditor had mentioned in terms of the workers' safety in some of the work that she done to investigate this whole notion of what I think is a government duty.

And we have to start asking ourselves, well shouldn't we investigate the cause of the accidents as opposed to just noting that the accident occurred? Because obviously if you investigate the cause of that accident, it could make the workplace safe because you could eliminate that threat later down the road. And that's exactly what I think the auditor was trying to speak about. And that's why I think the minister should be well advised to really coordinate his efforts on this front with the auditor to say, well okay it's being noted, but there's no further action in terms of finding out how the workplace infraction happened. Then it becomes problematic in the sense that this may occur but it could have more drastic circumstances.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I think there's so many things that we could speak about on this particular Bill. It's not a great thing to have as a province. You know it was noted that we have the second highest workplace injury rate in Canada. There's obviously something wrong somewhere, and I would suggest that perhaps not investigating thoroughly enough the cause of the infraction as opposed to just noting the infraction, I would suggest that that probably has a lot to do with that high rate.

Right now, as the unions would tell you, that they are prepared to give great advice. The unions are prepared to give you some solutions to some of the long-standing problems because the unions, from all the information I got, they highlight Mission: Zero as the mantra when we talk about workplace safety. So right from the government perspective to the union perspective, Mission: Zero is the accomplishment, but there are different paths as to how you can accomplish that. And I would suggest not noting the infractions but actually checking the basis of those infractions, why they occurred, would be a good first step in terms of knocking down those numbers and trying to become a more responsible government when it comes to worker safety.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again the second highest workplace injury in Canada is not something that we should be proud of. So we need to make sure, we need to make sure that the ongoing consultation with the stakeholders, especially the unions because they have, like I mentioned, they have great experience — it's all their members at risk — that they would certainly have the audience of the minister on a pretty constant basis, a consistent basis so they can offer their insight as to how they can bring those numbers down, and pray that we have a Mission: Zero objective and accomplish that one of these days. It's a difficult task, but we have to take the time to make sure it happens.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know other members of my caucus will want to speak on this Bill at greater detail and certainly at a later time. And as always, as the Bills are being introduced — and I'm certainly explaining this to people back home — our option is to explain the Bill and to thank the minister for the information, but other colleague members are to have the opportunity to debate the merits of the Bill and put their points forward and try to amend the Bill and so on and so forth. And that process takes time.

[16:45]

So the two or three months that we have before the spring sitting, we will take the time to invite the stakeholders, the unions, the industry, and the different people that are out there that could give us some advice on how we strengthen this Bill and all work towards Mission: Zero. We are all committed to that, and we will certainly continue building on that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his information. We have a lot more to say on this Bill. But given the time frame we're under at this point, I would move that we adjourn debate on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The member for Athabasca has moved adjournment of Bill No. 23, *The Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Requesting leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Rosemont has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Rosemont.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you seated in your gallery I am pleased to see two surprise guests here today. Both my mom and my dad are here today, so a little bit of a surprise. I don't know what they're doing at this time of day. I guess actually I do know. There was a funeral here this afternoon. But a pleasure to see both of them here today. And this is Craik Wotherspoon and Faye Wotherspoon. And you know, I think that Craik probably gives me a little bit of the passion that I have in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and I think Faye gives me all of the sensibility that hopefully I bring to the Assembly. If not, maybe I didn't have that part transferred from my mother.

My dad's been an educator for many, many years in Saskatchewan, born in Melville, Saskatchewan, and son of an elevator agent with the Wheat Pool, and currently a principal for Raymore and which has him in Regina here today. And my mom does the good work for Scotiabank after raising us as children and staying at home, and went back to work and worked for the Scotiabank for many years and manages their customer service and many other aspects there, lots of their audits and activities and making sure everything's being handled properly. So sometimes she also has some good advice on the file of finance. But it's a pleasure to have both of them here today and certainly a very important part of our lives and lucky to have them so involved in the activities that we have from a political nature as well.

I know that my father was one of the most regular door knockers that I had on Saturday afternoons during this last election. And the one thing with Craik is he feels that he should be able to convince almost everybody that their support should come our way, so he tries this angle and that angle and this angle. He's a pretty effective door knocker, Mr. Speaker, and a real pleasure to work with — both of them in so many ways and of course just appreciate all of their support. So nice to have you here today, mom and dad, and I'd like to have all members of this Assembly provide you a warm welcome.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 24 — *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join

with the member opposite in welcoming his parents to the Legislative Assembly. I think it's wonderful when families come, especially this time of year. I'd like to encourage them not to spend too much money Christmas shopping. There are better things they could do by making donations to other political parties, but I leave that to them to decide how they wish to spend their money.

Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 24, *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act*. This Act will help children receiving services from the government and publicly funded health entities. In addition to creating a separate piece of legislation for the advocate, this Act will clarify the advocate's power to address complaints related to publicly funded health entities. It will allow the advocate to conduct research in the area of children's rights, and it will allow government ministries and agencies to co-operate in sharing information with the advocate, thereby creating a more welcoming environment for youth to bring forward their concerns.

The new Act will replace *The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act* and will set out the powers and responsibilities of the newly termed "Advocate for Children and Youth."

When the advocate's office was created in 1994, the Ombudsman had responsibility for the administration of the office of the advocate. However, in 2000 the Ombudsman's oversight of the advocate's office was removed from the legislation. As such there is no need for the Ombudsman and advocate to be governed by the same statute.

Mr. Speaker, the separation of the statutes helps give the public clarity about the services available to them. Having two statutes will reduce any public confusion as to roles and responsibilities of these Independent Officers. The new legislation supports the distinctive duties, responsibilities, and offices of these Independent Officers of the legislature. To clarify, Mr. Speaker, both the advocate and the Ombudsman have jurisdiction over the same entities; however, the Ombudsman deals with complaints about services provided to adults, while the advocate deals with complaints about services provided to children and youth.

The second important piece of this new legislation is the jurisdiction of the advocate over publicly funded health entities. The Bill more clearly defines the advocate's authority to include regional health authorities, health care organizations and affiliates, and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the advocate will now have jurisdiction to conduct research relating to the rights of children and youth. The advocate will have the mandate to start working in this interesting and complicated area of children's rights, either on the advocate's own initiative or at the direction of the legislature.

The next major point in this new legislation allows for government ministries and agencies to share information voluntarily with the advocate to help promote simpler, quicker, and non-adversarial dispute resolution. Currently most complaints to the advocate are resolved using non-adversarial approaches. Only about 5 per cent of complaints are resolved using the formal investigation process. The remaining 95 per

cent are resolved using negotiation, mediation, and conciliation where voluntary access to information helps reach a resolution. The new Act will provide clear authority for ministries and other government agencies to voluntarily provide the advocate with access to information.

This Act also ensures children and youth the greatest possible access to the advocate. Operators of group homes, foster homes, and other facilities will be required to provide the children and youth in their care with information on how to contact the advocate. They must also provide a means for them to do so in private. All communication between child or youth and the advocate are privileged.

You will note, Mr. Speaker, the addition of the term, youth, in the title of the Act. Older children or youth do not consider themselves children. Many of them do not believe that the advocate's services are available to them. Changing the name of the officer to the Advocate for Children and Youth helps reduce the confusion and the reluctance of youth to seek help from the advocate.

Mr. Speaker, this Act was drafted after detailed consultations with the current Children's Advocate, Bob Pringle, Ombudsman, Kevin Fenwick, and the ministries of Health, Social Services, and Corrections, Public Safety and Policing. Consultations were also held with representatives of regional health authorities and numerous publicly funded health care providers.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to move second reading of Bill No. 24, *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act*.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General has moved second reading of Bill No. 24, *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to stand on behalf of the official opposition and, of course, offer our continued opinion on a number of Bills and in particular this Bill as well.

I think there's no question that this is an area that needs a lot of attention because obviously the minister had pointed out that he's expanding the name and thus the mandate of the Children's Advocate to include youth. Now, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of questions when it comes to the future of our youth. I think that the office that has the independence to look at all the issues facing our youth and the children is an office that we certainly lean on on many occasions to seek advice from and get some solid points from as well.

So I looked at the Bill overall very quickly, Mr. Speaker. There are some things we want to ask. And as you expand the role for any particular department or in this case a independent office, we need to know if there is adequate monies for that office to make sure that they can do their duties and fulfill the obligations attached to that office.

And that's one of the things that's really important to us is that there are so many children at risk and now it's youth at risk. And you look at the problems we have right across

Saskatchewan that we need to do something. We need to make sure that we can alter the direction for many families that have a most difficult time, a most difficult time.

And you see some of those challenges surface at very critical times like Christmas. And you know that sometimes it's a celebration for some families, and sometimes people have a really, really tough time during the festive season for a number of issues. And as you would know, Mr. Speaker, there is that challenge that the province has.

So as I look at some the parts of the Bill that are really important, when you're an advocate for children and youth it brings in a whole host of questions as to what the mandate is going to be like, what the challenge that this is supposed to address. And we're hoping, from the official opposition perspective, that this simply isn't a name change, that along with the name change comes a new mandate and along with the new mandate comes all kinds of activity within government to respond to this crisis. And that's the important message that we have in relation to this particular Bill.

So I would point out that the Bill and the language certainly is something that we applaud. Because increasing the mandate to include youth is really, really important that we do this. And that's why, when we seen the Bill come forward, we told our staff to have a close look at this. Because it is something that is necessary and certainly something that is needed.

So we have a bunch of questions, and we certainly want to see what the, who the minister may have consulted with. And again I go back to the earlier comments: consultation is a lot different to consulted and had agreement with. And that's what we always look for, Mr. Speaker, is the last phrase — and had agreement with the following groups. And that's pretty darn important in any Bills, Mr. Speaker, because it's one thing to consult but it's another thing to get agreement from the different parties that you consult. And I tell people that may be listening that the language that the government uses is quite important. So when they say that we consulted with this group and that group, people might think, yes okay, they consulted with that group and these groups supported them. That's not the case. Many times it's primarily consultation. It doesn't necessarily mean agreement. So it's important that that is noted.

And as I indicated to the caucus, that this debate is going to have a lot of effect on my area as well as my colleague's area. Because as we know, northern Saskatchewan has a great amount of challenge in dealing with youth and dealing with children, primarily because of the poor houses, you know, the lack of jobs, the training that is necessary — the list goes on. We see that in the forest fringe as well. We see that in some of the small towns and villages. We see that in the inner cities. And we have to address this problem because it's been out there and it certainly needs the attention that it warrants.

So in looking at the Bill overall, there are some sections that we're quite interested in. There are provisions in there that we want to pay attention to. And the biggest thing, of course, is we want to make sure that we check if the government affords this Bill with the proper amount of money. And that is the key thing. So I think people out there should know that we intend to do that.

So again we have people that have been researching this Bill. We intend to continue paying attention to it. It's very, very important to the future of Saskatchewan. We hope that some of the intent on this Bill would have some positive effect on the Minister of Education because she's obviously got some problems in that field. So we need to fix that area to complement this area as well as housing, and the list goes on and on and on, Mr. Speaker. So it all is connected and it all is important. And as an official opposition, we will certainly continue paying very close attention to this file. So, Mr. Speaker, based on that note and the lateness of the hour, I would move that we adjourn debate on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The member for Athabasca has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 24, *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:59.]

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