



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

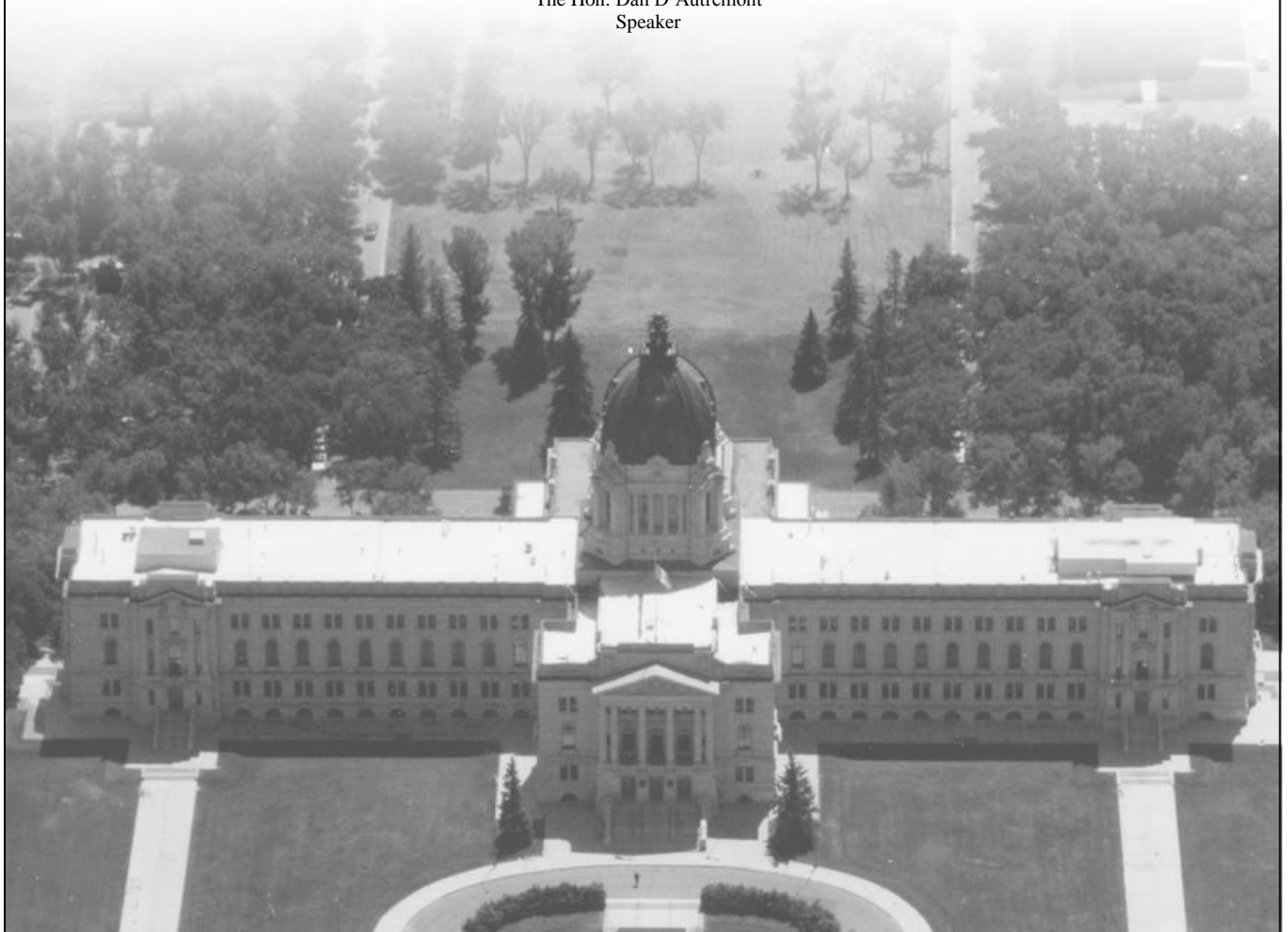
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
authority of  
The Hon. 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, 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, Hon. 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, Jeremy         | SP                    | Meadow Lake               |
| Hart, Glen               | SP                    | Last Mountain-Touchwood   |
| Heppner, Hon. Nancy      | SP                    | Martensville              |
| Hickie, Darryl           | SP                    | Prince Albert Carlton     |
| Hutchinson, Bill         | SP                    | Regina South              |
| Huyghebaert, 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         |
| Makowsky, Gene           | SP                    | Regina Dewdney            |
| Marchuk, Hon. Russ       | SP                    | Regina Douglas Park       |
| McCall, Warren           | NDP                   | Regina Elphinstone-Centre |
| McMillan, Hon. Tim       | SP                    | Lloydminster              |
| McMorris, Hon. Don       | SP                    | Indian Head-Milestone     |
| 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, Rob              | SP                    | Saskatoon Greystone       |
| Ottenbreit, Greg         | SP                    | Yorkton                   |
| Parent, Roger            | SP                    | Saskatoon Meewasin        |
| Phillips, Kevin          | SP                    | Melfort                   |
| Reiter, Hon. Jim         | SP                    | Rosetown-Elrose           |
| Ross, Laura              | SP                    | Regina Qu'Appelle Valley  |
| Sproule, Cathy           | NDP                   | Saskatoon Nutana          |
| Steinley, Warren         | SP                    | Regina Walsh Acres        |
| Stewart, Hon. Lyle       | SP                    | Thunder Creek             |
| Tell, Hon. 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, Hon. Randy       | SP                    | Biggar                    |
| Wilson, Nadine           | SP                    | Saskatchewan Rivers       |
| Wotherspoon, Trent       | NDP                   | Regina Rosemont           |
| Wyant, Hon. Gordon       | SP                    | Saskatoon Northwest       |

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly and guests who have joined us, a very special guest seated in your gallery. Mr Speaker, for his third visit to the province of Saskatchewan, we want to welcome His Excellency Ambassador David Jacobson, the ambassador for the United States to Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I know you had a chance to host a meeting and some time together with our US [United States] legislative friends that have joined us and the ambassador. Mr. Speaker, I know everyone in this House prizes the relationship that we have as a province and as a country with the United States of America. They're quite simply our closest friend and ally and most important trading partner. And so then it's therefore very important that we not become complacent about the relationship, that we never, ever take it for granted, but that we're stewards of the relationship, that we're always promoting the trade and the alliance that is ours and the friendship that is ours.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we welcome the ambassador's visit because that's certainly been his intention since his appointment by President Obama. We welcome him again to our capital city and the Legislative Assembly.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too want to stand on behalf of the official opposition and join the Premier in welcoming the ambassador of the US to Canada, His Excellency David Jacobson.

There's no question that we concur that the US is one of our great friends and allies, and we certainly hope that your visit to Canada and to our capital city here in Saskatchewan is both pleasurable and certainly productive as well. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Government Whip.

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all the members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce to this Assembly 28 great grade 10 students from the Yorkton Regional High School in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker.

Along with them is their teacher Mr. Perry Ostapowich, who I talked about a bit yesterday. He's a great teacher and really engages the kids in the legislative process in our province. Along with him, another teacher, Mr. Grant Bjornerud, who is related to a member on this floor. A lady down the hallway

asked me if that was any relation to the member from Melville-Saltcoats. And I said, yes you can tell by looking at them. They're very similar, although Grant is a little bit more handsome. With them are interns Ally Rock and Kristine Kreklewich, as well as an educational assistant, Ms. Janet Varga.

One other student I'd like to point out — I love to embarrass him — is my nephew Turner Ottenbreit from Yorkton, an accomplished hockey player, much like the member from Athabasca. And he's just a great young man; he's just about like my son. And I'm very proud of the young man he's grown into, and I'm looking forward to his future in hockey and whatever he pursues.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like all members to welcome these fine people to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to join with the member for Yorkton in welcoming the Yorkton group here today, but I also want to take this opportunity to welcome and introduce my son to the legislature. We don't get that opportunity very often. I'm certainly glad the member for Yorkton acknowledged the hereditary traits that I've passed on to my son. Thank goodness hair is not one of them.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to welcome him here today, but acknowledge Perry Ostapowich. And the member for Yorkton has mentioned him a couple of times yesterday and today. Mr. Ostapowich taught in Melville and then now has moved on to Yorkton, and it's certainly our loss. But he's been very faithful in bringing school groups into the legislature to see how the process works in here. So I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming all of them here today.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Central Services.

**Hon. Ms. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sitting in your gallery today are 24 public service employees. They are partaking in the parliamentary program for the public service. Participants are employees from the following ministries. They are representing Agriculture; Economy; Energy and Resources; Environment; Government Relations; Health; Social Services; Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport. And also we have employees from the Legislative Assembly Service, Office of the Provincial Auditor, and the Provincial Capital Commission.

Mr. Speaker, this is an in-depth program for employees in the public service to understand a little bit more about what we do during the day. And I am looking forward to meeting with them after question period today, as are you, I understand, as well. So I ask all members to welcome them here to their Assembly.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Minister for the Public Service in welcoming these

public servants to their legislature, to commend them for taking a greater interest in the functioning of the legislative aspect of the public service. On behalf of the official opposition, I'll have the opportunity to meet with them later this day after the Minister for Public Service, so that will be extra interesting, Mr. Speaker. But I join with the minister in welcoming these public servants to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Mr. Bradshaw:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of this Assembly, I'd like to introduce two people in your gallery from the town of Nipawin: the mayor, Dave Trann — Dave, give us a wave — and Councillor Mike Botterill. They came down here today to meet up with some of the ministries and talk about some of the great things that are going on around Nipawin. It's a pleasure to have them down here. Not too often we get people all the way down here from up in Carrot River Valley.

The other thing is, is Mike told me that he definitely knows how to fish walleye. And he's better than a lot of some other members of this Assembly that have been up there for tournaments, and he can actually catch walleye that are big fish. So I would like all members to welcome them to their Assembly.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seated in your gallery today are some very special guests. They are representatives of the Ahmadiyya movement in Islam which promotes peace and partnership between communities.

Visiting from Toronto, we have Lal Khan Malik, national president; Colonel Amjad Khan, national secretary of property; from Saskatoon — one of my constituents — Nasser Malik, president of the Saskatoon branch; Zahid Abid, a missionary in Saskatoon; Dr. Musadaq Hayat and Taqi Khan. From Regina we have Dr. Habib ur Rehman, president, Regina branch; Muhammad Fiaz, general secretary, Regina branch; and Safeer Ahmad, also a member of the Regina branch. Mr. Speaker, it is my hope to meet with these members shortly after question period, but I suppose that will depend on the good conduct of the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, the Ahmadiyya Muslim faith is established in 190 countries. It promotes a message of peace and tolerance. The movement carries a simple message: love for all, hatred for none. The Ahmadiyya movement reminds us that the values we share are stronger than those that seek to divide us. I would ask all members of the legislature to welcome these special guests to our legislature today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Minister of Advanced Education in welcoming the members from the Ahmadiyya community. It's a true pleasure to have you here today. A special welcome to the guests from Ontario

and to the guests from Saskatoon — my home city as well. It's wonderful to have you here, and your message of peaceful coexistence is a Canadian message and one that is appreciated by all people of faith here in the province. So we thank you for your presence here in the Assembly. Peace be with you. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, to you and through you to this Assembly, it's my pleasure to introduce some guests in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. We have with us today the chief of the Saskatoon Tribal Council, Chief Felix Thomas. And among officials with Chief Thomas are also Vice-chief Geraldine Arcand and executive director of STC [Saskatoon Tribal Council] health and family services, Ceal Tournier.

Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to visit with them for just a few minutes earlier, and I look forward to a lengthier meeting this afternoon where we're going to discuss, I assume, a wide variety of issues.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to please give Chief Thomas and his guests a warm welcome to our Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thought I'd seen the tribal chief up there behind the clock, and now I know it to be true. I just want to join with the minister in welcoming Tribal Chief Felix Thomas from the Saskatoon Tribal Council, Vice-chief Geraldine Arcand, and the officials to Treaty 4 territory and File Hills Qu'Appelle territory. But it's really good to see them here.

Saskatoon Tribal Council is certainly a very progressive and forward-looking and very active tribal council, and do a lot of great work for their members and for the First Nations they represent, but certainly setting that example across the province. So it's really good to see the tribal chief, vice-chief, the representatives here today from the Saskatoon Tribal Council.

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

**Mr. Harrison:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to welcome to the Assembly today a constituent of mine, Mrs. Neva Merasty, all the way down from the Flying Dust First Nation. It's great to see you down here. It's not often we have visitors from the Meadow Lake constituency, but welcome to your Assembly.

## PRESENTING PETITIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on cellphone coverage for northwest Saskatchewan. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Undertake, as soon as possible, to ensure that SaskTel

delivers cell service to the Canoe Lake First Nations, along with the adjoining communities of Cole Bay and Jans Bay; Buffalo River First Nation, also known as Dillon, and the neighbouring communities of Michel Village and St. George's Hill; English River First Nation, also known as Patuanak, and the hamlet of Patuanak; and Birch Narrows First Nations along with the community of Turnor Lake; and, [Mr. Speaker], this includes all neighbouring communities in each of these areas.

And the people that have signed this petition are primarily from Turnor Lake, but many people from all throughout the land have signed many of these petitions. And I hereby present.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise to present petitions on behalf of residents from across our province as it relates to concerns about the finances of our province. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that the honourable Legislative Assembly call on the Sask Party government to provide Saskatchewan people with the fair, true state of our finances by providing appropriate summary financial accounting and reporting that is in line with the rest of Canada in compliance with public accounting standards and following the independent Provincial Auditor's recommendations; and also to begin to provide responsible, sustainable, and trustworthy financial management as deserved by Saskatchewan people, organizations, municipalities, institutions, taxpayers, and businesses.

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

[13:45]

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents of Moose Jaw. I so submit.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of the leadership and community of Wollaston Lake. In 2008 February they were promised an all-weather road to the community of Wollaston Lake to be completed by 2012 construction year. That has not happened.

That the Government of Saskatchewan stop turning their backs on the people from northern Saskatchewan and start investing in public highways in the North.

And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to recognize that construction on the road to Wollaston Lake, which was started under the previous NDP government, has shown little to no progress and must be completed quickly.

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

It is signed by the leadership and community members of Wollaston Lake. I so present.

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture

### A Tribute to Neil Jahnke

**Hon. Mr. Stewart:** — Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that I rise today to pay tribute to a fellow rancher and a leader in our cattle industry, Mr. Neil Jahnke, who passed away on Monday, November 26th. Neil was a constituent of mine who ranched near Gouldtown. He leaves behind his wife Marilyn, daughter J.J., and son Shane.

Neil served in numerous organizations throughout his life with dedication and passion. Neil served as president of the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association, president of the Canadian Cattleman's Association, chairman of the Canadian Beef Export Federation, president of the Saskatchewan Livestock Association, chairman of the National Beef Information Centre, and director of Canadian Western Agribition.

Mr. Speaker, Neil was a tireless advocate and a strong voice for our cattle producers. That voice was perhaps its strongest when we needed it most during the BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] crisis. His leadership during that difficult time boosted consumer confidence in our beef, and he stood up against protectionist policies that threatened the industry. Neil received numerous well-deserved honours throughout his life, including an honorary life membership in the Agricultural Institute of Canada, the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, and induction into the Saskatchewan Agriculture Hall of Fame.

Mr. Speaker, I offer my condolences to Neil's family, and I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in recognizing his contributions to our province and agriculture industry.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

### All Nations Job Fair

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to draw attention and commendation to the All Nations Job Fair that is taking place today, getting under way literally as I speak at Evraz Place here in Regina. The All Nations Job Fair is a first-year event presented by the Ministry of the Economy and saskjobs.ca and the Regina & District Chamber of Commerce. We commend these entities for their support of this valuable initiative.

A special word of thanks goes to the leadership of the Regina Chamber of Commerce for this event, especially for the work, commitment, and passion on this issue by Regina Chamber CEO [chief executive officer] John Hopkins. I also want to thank the many businesses and organizations taking this active approach to helping address labour force issues throughout Regina and region.

Mr. Speaker, an important aspect of this job fair is its focus on connecting First Nations people with job and career

opportunities here in the Regina region. But indeed, Mr. Speaker, all nations are welcome. Another important part of the proceedings will be the attention paid to career pathing, an opportunity for workers, students, employees, and the employers and training institutions to come together and negotiate strategies that are mutually beneficial for both businesses and potential employees. With career planning, career counsellors are provided by SaskJobs and meet individually with each job seeker to find a position that fits their skill level and educational background. However, the fair takes it a step further by linking potential students to post-secondary institutions to identify programming needs to fit their interests and career ambitions.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations to the Regina Chamber of Commerce for the All Nations Job Fair and a special word of thanks to John Hopkins for his commitment and passion on this issue.

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

#### Saskatchewan Citizens Awarded Order of Merit

**Mr. Doke:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to congratulate eight outstanding Saskatchewan citizens who recently received the Saskatchewan Order of Merit. The Saskatchewan Order of Merit is the province's highest honour, recognizing individuals who have contributed significantly to the well-being of Saskatchewan. They are as follows:

Raymond Ahenakew, a friend, a constituent, a tireless leader who has cleared the way for First Nations people to strengthen their participation in the economy.

Bruce Beatty, who recently received the award posthumously, was an accomplished graphic artist and the designer of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit.

Sandra Louise Birdsell, an award-winning writer, editor, and teacher.

Dr. Barbara Keirnes Young has been an innovator in education and a mentor for women in leadership. Dr. Young was the Ministry of Education's first female superintendent of education.

W. Thomas Molloy, who served as chief federal negotiator for the Government of Canada for nearly 30 years. He is one of our nation's most respected negotiators concerning indigenous land claims and treaty settlements.

Dr. Brian Rosnagel has devoted his career to increasing economic returns and reducing business risk for agricultural producers.

Regina painter and sculptor David Thauberger is recognized internationally. His paintings of prairie storefronts celebrate small towns of Saskatchewan.

And W. Brett Wilson is one of Canada's best-known businessmen and most respected philanthropists. Motivated by a deep and enduring affection for his home province, the North

Battleford native has often focused his entrepreneurial and philanthropic efforts on Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating these amazing Saskatchewan citizens on receiving the 2012 Saskatchewan Order of Merit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Essay Celebrates a Colleague

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Alex Sokalski, a constituent of Saskatoon Centre, for the selection of one of his essays to be included in a commemorative collection of dissertations honouring Alex's friend and colleague, François Moureau.

Alex visited Paris, France where he attended a reception on November 16th to celebrate the work and life of François. Alex is one of the esteemed few whose academic essays were selected for a festschrift, a collection of academic papers that are prepared in honour of a retiring professor. And, Mr. Speaker, this is a common practice among post-secondary institutions in Europe.

Mr. Speaker, Alex feels honoured to have been part of this tribute. He said, and I quote:

A number of very celebrated scholars have participated. I'm fortunate that my work is published alongside a very elite group of those who have studied and done research in this particular field. I feel I've reached my pinnacle goal.

Alex is an avid volunteer and the current secretary-treasurer for the Saskatchewan branch of Canadian Parents for French. He is a lifetime academic scholar whose first language is English. He has taught various courses in French culture and history at the University of Saskatchewan for over 30 years. Alex explains his love of the French language by saying:

My journey began in college, when I had a French instructor who led me into what would become a fascination with eighteenth century French literature. My interest and love for French and for how people live their language has always been strong.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Alex for the inclusion of his essay in this very important publication. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Canada Cup of Curling

**Mr. Lawrence:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night I had the honour of bringing greetings at the opening ceremonies for the 2012 Canada Cup of Curling at Mosaic Place in Moose Jaw. This marquee event will feature seven men's and seven women's elite teams who earned their way into the Cup through their participation in previous curling events this winter.

The winners of the Canada Cup of Curling will now become direct qualifiers for the 2013 Tim Hortons Roar of the Rings Canadian Olympic Trials slated for one year from now where Canada's men's and women's representatives for the 2014 Olympic Games will be determined.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to mention Becca Garner and Lane Greenwood, both of Moose Jaw Wakamow. After writing essays on how they give back to their community, they were each given the opportunity to participate as two of the 14 SaskEnergy Junior Stars this week.

Mr. Speaker, the speaker of Moose Jaw will be in the national spotlight this week as TSN [The Sports Network] has decided to televise every draw of this week's event. And I am confident that Moose Jaw will rise up to the occasion.

Mr. Speaker, an event like this is not possible without the help of hundreds of volunteers, and I want to thank everyone who has helped make this week's event a success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Leader-Post Christmas Cheer Fund

**Mr. Docherty:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to bring attention to an exceptional seasonal charity, the Leader-Post Christmas Cheer Fund. Each year the Leader-Post Christmas Cheer Fund raises money for women's shelters in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, the Christmas Cheer Fund supports four women's shelters which provide help to those seeking refuge from domestic violence and abuse. Every year hundreds of women seek refuge at the four Regina shelters supported by this charity: The Regina Transition House, the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] Isabel Johnson Shelter, WISH [Wichihik Iskewwak] Safe House, and Sofia House.

Mr. Speaker, since 1992 *Leader-Post* readers donated more than \$2 million to the Christmas Cheer Fund, and every year donations to the fund have continued. Last year, almost \$224,000 was donated. The donations are used to help enhance programs and services for women and children at the four shelters that the Cheer Fund supports.

Mr. Speaker, domestic violence and abuse is about domination and control. Recognizing abuse is the first step to getting help. Domestic violence often escalates from threats and verbal abuse to violence, and while physical injury may be the most obvious danger, the emotional and psychological consequences of domestic abuse are also severe.

Emotionally abusive relationships can destroy your self worth, lead to anxiety and depression, and make you feel helpless and alone. No one should have to endure this kind of pain. And your first step to breaking free is recognizing that your situation is abusive. Once you acknowledge the reality of the abusive situation, then you can get the help you need. It takes a lot of courage to admit to oneself that you have been abused and even more courage to reach out and ask for help.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking the Leader-Post Christmas Cheer Fund for their outstanding support to Regina women's shelters, and I ask all members to join me in thanking Regina women's shelters for their amazing work in helping victims of domestic abuse and violence. Thank you.

#### QUESTION PERIOD

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

#### State of Provincial Finances

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, it's been manoeuvres from the get-go with this Sask Party budget, all to portray a picture that's rosier than reality. In March they made overly optimistic resource revenue estimates and punted \$100 million of debt onto the backs of universities and students to take that off our books and pretend to balance. Taking from Peter, Mr. Speaker, to pay Paul, if you will. Despite tabling a precarious budget from day one, government doubled down on costly spin and ran billboards boasting balance with public money.

Mr. Speaker, confirmed in the mid-year report, why is this government more interested in budgetary spin than a sound fiscal plan?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, we were pleased to table the mid-year report yesterday — the only provincially balanced budget in all of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, there have been many comments about the budget. We've heard from the journalists. We've heard from people in the press from many different areas but, Mr. Speaker, one of the key factors is the CIBC World Markets. And Mr. Warren Lovely indicated today, and I quote, "Consistent with its relative economic out-performance, Saskatchewan maintains a healthier budgetary position than other provinces."

Mr. Speaker, that's a quote that we acknowledge from CIBC World Markets. It tells us about the budget that we have, which is a balanced budget on both summary and General Revenue Fund.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, not only does this budget contain cuts, but it also defers the needed building and repair of schools and infrastructure projects in our Crowns. Mr. Speaker, the mid-term report updates a budget that has been manipulated from day one. Now all that props up their boastful claims are a one-time accounting adjustment and more budgetary manoeuvres such as the deferral of infrastructure projects in our Crowns exceeding \$200 million, not unlike the late-year, unplanned \$120 million cash grab from SaskPower of last year, something that we're all paying for now, Mr. Speaker. Taking Peter to pay Paul, Mr. Speaker. Does the minister not realize that the people of our province see through his budgetary games?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, what people who are outside of the province of Saskatchewan, what they're seeing is that Saskatchewan is in fact the only province with a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. That's what people are seeing. That's why we have 80,000 more people in this province in the last five years. That's why we have 10,000 more people working, Mr. Speaker.

When we look at the fact that the credit rating agencies of Saskatchewan in this country have given Saskatchewan an AAA rating, Mr. Speaker, the NDP [New Democratic Party] never even believed that that was ever possible because they were planning for decline, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to work in a province that is interested in growth, that ensures that growth is going to be able to pay for all of the things we need, including the infrastructure deficit that the NDP left us.

[14:00]

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, this government's scrambling with short-sighted moves to maintain their spin and their PR [public relations]. All of these deferrals only delay a financial problem, and now government is liquidating assets to have the cash required for next year, a sell-off of dividend-paying assets like ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan], not to mention a sell-off of land and affordable homes. And now they're trying to find a way to build infrastructure that we need without the upfront cash, with their costly new private approach to infrastructure. These are nothing more than short-sighted manoeuvres to manipulate our books.

Mr. Speaker, we've had enough with the games. Why won't the Sask Party table the real numbers and a budget plan that works for Saskatchewan people?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the budget that we planned in the spring was planned for a balanced budget. It remains a balanced budget, and the people of the province appreciate that.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there's one thing. The member opposite stands and talks about credibility and balanced budgets. Mr. Speaker, it was one year ago today that the NDP Finance critic announced that the NDP was reversing its costly and unfair policy on First Nations revenue sharing. Just two days later, he pulled a double reverse by reversing his reversal. And then on the day he launched his leadership campaign, he refused to say where he stands on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, \$5 billion of unaffordable election promises, three different positions on First Nations resource revenue sharing: that's what the member's record is, and I'm not going to take any advice from him.

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

### Referral Process Resulting From Use of Surgical Mesh

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Legislative Assembly is a place for people to bring their concerns. A group of women came to the legislature today to tell their stories and express their concerns about the use of surgical mesh as it relates to women's health. These people are Marika English, Stephanie Brad, and Ruth Olson who joined us in the west gallery after the introductions this morning.

Mr. Speaker, these women are seeking a course of action that will best resolve their medical situation. That is why they came to the Assembly today. We as legislators owe it to constituents to listen to these concerns, so I'm pleased that the minister had the opportunity to sit down with them before question period.

My question to the minister: could the minister please outline the next steps that the ministry will be taking to resolve the situation for the women who came to the Assembly today?

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

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his question and the information that he's been able to provide on this serious issue over the last week. As well I want to thank our guests that are here, Mr. Speaker. I've had an opportunity to meet with these three women, as well as their spouses, just prior to coming in to question period. We had a very thorough conversation and one that was very informative.

Mr. Speaker, in a case such as these, it is typically the responsibility of the specialist in Saskatchewan to look for options, either those that are out of province or indeed, if that is not the case and not available, then out of the country, Mr. Speaker. The Ministry of Health has taken an additional step as well to canvass across Canada, Mr. Speaker, to determine if support is available within Canada. We have received word that that is the case for those individuals that haven't had this removal, Mr. Speaker, or help from a specialist that is available within Canada. And for those that have gone out of the country we have, as a government, put a process in place for them to seek recourse. And we would invite them to look at those options.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The women came to the legislature today to have an answer about the process. They understand that there is a process, but what I've heard from them, Mr. Speaker, is that there's a great deal of urgency for an answer. And they've gone through the necessary steps, as I understand it. We know that they're suffering, based on the stories that they have told, and they have been waiting for an answer.

So my question to the minister: I understand that he met and received information and that's a very good step, but what I've heard from the women is that they want a clear answer about when they will actually know, when they will receive an answer. So appreciating that there is a process to follow, my question on behalf of the women: when will they have a



specific answer about their course of treatment?

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

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, knowing that these are, in this case, three individuals that have three different experiences and are at different points in their course of action, I wouldn't want to comment specifically on each of those cases, Mr. Speaker, except to say that for those individuals that have already sought treatment out of the country, we do have a process where they can appeal the decision that has been made by the Ministry of Health in terms of out-of-country coverage and the recourse that that will take place, Mr. Speaker, if that would be available. And that information has, that information in those cases is being determined at this point by the review committee.

Mr. Speaker, for those individuals that have not yet sought treatment out of the country, what we are advising, Mr. Speaker, and what we are confirming with specialists here in the province, is that there is a specialist within Canada that we would refer people to. This is work that normally is done by their own specialist, but in this case we have as well canvassed across the country and are providing that information to specialists here in Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that it's a common issue with three specific cases, each unique because it's unique individuals. But what I've heard from the individuals is a real desire to have a definite answer about when they might know. They want an answer, Mr. Speaker. So the minister doesn't have to state the answer at this exact moment on this date on the floor. But will he commit today, Mr. Speaker, to provide specific dates to the three women as to when they would have a final answer with respect to the course of treatment?

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

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Mr. Speaker, in terms of a date by which we can confirm with these individuals if it is a matter of providing a referral to a specialist within Canada, Mr. Speaker, that information needs to be communicated by their specialist here in the province. And we've certainly provided information, have checked, done a cross-Canada check to see which specialist would be able to provide those services, Mr. Speaker. Now of course it is difficult for that specialist out of province to be able to completely provide a course of action for that patient before they're being able to see. So I can't at this date, I cannot at this date give a date to these individuals in terms of when they will be, when they will be seen by a specialist within Canada.

In terms of the date for an answer on reimbursement, Mr. Speaker, we will work to get an answer for these individuals, but that work has to make its way through the review committee if out-of-country treatment has already been sought. And so therefore I won't have a date, specific date for that as well.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon

Riversdale.

### Combatting Impaired Driving

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time of year with many people celebrating holidays, safe driving is top of mind. The number of highway fatalities this year has the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] very concerned — 146 people have lost their lives on our highways already this year. Sergeant Ron MacRae said recently, "The single greatest contributor to fatalities is impaired driving. Drinking and driving is the main thing we need to work on."

The government is tightening the rules to respond to speeding in the orange zone. We support these changes because they make sense. But when it comes to drinking and driving, this government clearly needs to do more. We need to see leadership to tackle this issue. Will the Premier take impaired driving as seriously as orange zone safety and work to reduce highway fatalities in Saskatchewan?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite that this is a very serious issue here in Saskatchewan. There's a number of initiatives that's undertaken by SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] and SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority], both of which I have the responsibility for.

These are programs that our government implemented such as report impaired drivers or the RID program, which has now resulted in more than 400 impaired drivers being taken off the road. In January of 2012, SGI and SLGA partnered with MADD [Mothers Against Drunk Driving], which is a great agency, and they produced a video which is presented to high school students throughout Saskatchewan to raise awareness when we have the younger drivers so that they, you know, they are aware early of the consequences of drinking and driving.

We have Operation Overdrive, which is a year-round program run by enforcement agencies within our province. They do stop checks that are targeted for impaired drivers. SGI provides money for that program, and that has resulted now in 2011 alone of 585 total infractions. This month of November, SGI is running an extensive ad campaign on the radios, posters in bars, restaurants across the province, reminding people that while a blood alcohol content of .08 is a Criminal Code offence, it's also administrative suspensions for motorists caught with a blood alcohol level of .04. And there's more, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure the member has another question.

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly those initiatives are good, but they're simply not enough when we hear about increased deaths on our highways and impaired driving being one of the main causes. Drinking and driving has a devastating effect on families and on our communities.

This government did the right thing by introducing stricter rules

for orange zones. It was something the Premier highlighted in the Throne Speech. But when highway fatalities are at some of the highest levels ever and the RCMP say many of these deaths are tied to drinking and driving, this is a crisis that warrants the Premier's attention. Saskatchewan families need to be able to travel safely and not worry about meeting an impaired driver on the road. Will the Premier tackle the problem of impaired driving and work with law enforcement to ensure we have safe roads for all Saskatchewan families?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I had just outlined, I believe it was, five different initiatives that we undertake as a government and that is partnering with our law enforcement. Ultimately each of us as individuals around our province have to take responsibility for not drinking and driving. Quite frankly it is a personal decision for each and every one of us and we have to recognize that as well. I would be more than happy to hear if in the next question the member opposite would give us her suggestion of what she thinks should be done in this province.

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Other provinces have shown leadership in their jurisdictions on drinking and driving. They have reduced their thresholds for blood alcohol limits and they've put in place stricter penalties for drinking and driving in their respective jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, all options need to be on the table. All options need to be on the table, and the Premier needs to show leadership for our province. He needs to send a strong message to Saskatchewan that impaired driving is not an acceptable part of our culture. What is the Premier going to do to reduce highway fatalities and address drinking and driving in Saskatchewan?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm going to repeat again that we do partner with our law enforcement agencies on this very important and very serious issue, of which we have 200 more officers now within our province than we did when we had an NDP government. And the member opposite perhaps didn't hear the one answer because she mentioned a very strong, aggressive advertising campaign, and I had just said that in November, SGI is undertaking just that very initiative.

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

### Physician Supply in Kipling

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Rural and Remote Health: does the minister share my concern about the impact of reduced hours at the Kipling Memorial Health Centre?

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

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. We're certainly aware of the reduction in hours at Kipling, Mr. Speaker. I know that the health region is working through that as they look to recruit additional doctors and additional providers, Mr. Speaker. And we certainly have supported all health regions and all communities by increasing the number of training seats in this province, Mr. Speaker, increasing the number of residencies, having more than 200 more physicians.

But, Mr. Speaker, as well as the Physician Recruitment Agency that is currently recruiting both overseas, Mr. Speaker, with the recent trip to India, as well, Mr. Speaker, at our own university here in Saskatchewan. And we'll work with the region and the community to address these issues.

[14:15]

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, what was a 24-hour health care facility in Kipling has been reduced to only operating 12 hours a day. This follows a month after emergency services in Kipling were eliminated due to a shortage of physicians. The member from Moosomin told his local paper that "Over the past number of years we've gradually seen a reduction in physician availability and that is certainly impacting our rural communities." He went on to say that the shortage of physicians is "becoming a significant issue."

So to the Minister of Rural and Remote Health: what is he doing about the reduced hours at the Kipling Memorial Health Centre?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

**Hon. Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, we know there's challenges in rural Saskatchewan in health care. And part of my tour that took place that I took this summer, I visited 40 different communities, and I talked to different health care providers and community leaders.

Now in Kipling, Mr. Speaker, there was a meeting held on Monday, November 19th with the health region, ministry, and local foundation, municipal leaders to discuss physician recruitment and how to restore emergency services once another physician has been recruited. So we have a plan in place, Mr. Speaker.

And in a provincial plan, as the Minister of Health just said, we are recruiting physicians from India right now. Saskdocs are in India. And we have a made-in-Saskatchewan assessment process to facilitate the foreign doctors to work in Saskatchewan. So we have many things in place, and we will continue to work very hard to bring doctors into rural Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a result of reduced services in Kipling, other communities are feeling more pressure as well. A letter in the recent issue of the *Carlyle Observer* from Sheila Sim, the secretary treasurer of Moose Mountain health care recruitment, says that “In recent weeks the Arcola Family Health Clinic has received many calls from frustrated area residents regarding the availability of physician services.” The letter goes on to say, “. . . patient volumes at the Arcola Family Health Clinic have increased significantly with the recent closure of the Kipling hospital and the intermittent closures of the Redvers Medical Clinic.” Finally, the letter says, Mr. Speaker, “We ask that residents consider the current physician shortage when determining the urgency of your medical requirements.”

So to the Minister of Rural and Remote Health: what does he have to say to those frustrated residents who are feeling first-hand the effects of reduced health care services in Kipling and the added pressure and physician shortage in the Arcola, Carlyle region?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

**Hon. Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our government has a plan in place that’s been incorporated, and we’re working very hard to recruit more doctors. But we also have increased the number of training seats at our college at the University of Saskatchewan. And as more doctors are trained in Saskatchewan and more foreign doctors that come into Saskatchewan, we hope to alleviate some of the concerns in rural communities and have more rural physicians practising in the province.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

### Information Services Corporation

**Ms. Sproule:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister’s repeated some big claims about why the Saskatchewan Party has returned to their 2003 ideology and their privatization agenda. ISC is being privatized for no discernible reason. The public doesn’t want ISC sold, because it’s profitable. And the privatization of the Crowns is certainly not what the people voted for, despite page 44 of their platform. One has to wonder what is going on with the state of the province’s books when the Sask Party touts the privatization of ISC as a source of revenue for infrastructure needs.

Now that the mid-term finances are out, the people of Saskatchewan are finally seeing what the Sask Party is up to, Mr. Speaker. And they’re looking for assets that aren’t nailed down to liquidate and cash in. Mr. Speaker, is the real reason the Sask Party is selling ISC is because they have a big fiscal hole they need to plug?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, it was a very interesting question and I want to touch on a couple of the points. The member opposite said that there is no discernible reason why

we moved ISC into the private sector, Mr. Speaker. Of course they would never understand the discernible reason of growth, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it’s allowing for this company to expand, not only across Canada but around the world, Mr. Speaker, so that the company grows, Mr. Speaker, we believe greatly, as we move forward.

The other point of her question, which is very curious, Mr. Speaker, is she was talking about the mid-term report. Well, Mr. Speaker, legislation on ISC won’t be passed until the spring and then after that, Mr. Speaker, before a share offering, it’s well down the road that any resources coming back from the sale of ISC would be realized by government. It has nothing to do with the mid-term report, Mr. Speaker, that is balanced on the fiscal, on the GRF [General Revenue Fund] as well as the summary financial statements.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Mr. Speaker, there is little appetite for the Sask Party’s ideological plans, and they know it. The Professional Surveyors Canada, a national organization of surveyors, recently wrote the Premier about his fire sale of ISC. They said:

From an economic point of view, the divesting of a Crown corporation that makes money and provides income to the government raises concerns. How is the public good served in the long term by this divestiture?

Mr. Speaker, the surveyors go on to say, “A sale of ISC to a private entity would adversely affect the impartiality of services to the public and to our members.”

To the minister: how is there any positive impact to the public from this ideological sell-off of ISC?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet with the Saskatchewan land surveyors as well as Guy Craig from the national association. We met back on November the 8th. I was able to answer many of their concerns, Mr. Speaker. I then also was able to meet with the Saskatchewan land surveyors’ annual general meeting on Monday and spoke to the group, Mr. Speaker, and addressed many of their concerns.

A couple of their concerns, Mr. Speaker, were around the controller of surveys and the registrar of titles. They’re quasi-judicial functions which were previously with ISC, Mr. Speaker. We were able to reassure them — as well as the Minister of Justice was with me as well — that those services will be moving back into the Ministry of Justice. So that, Mr. Speaker, answered many of their questions, not to mention the fact that the land titles would still be controlled and guaranteed by the provincial government, Mr. Speaker.

After raising a number of those points, Mr. Speaker, I’ve heard back from at least one member saying that they are quite satisfied that their points have been answered.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill No. 80 — *The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2012***

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Economy.

**Hon. Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 80, *The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2012* be now introduced and read a first time.

**The Speaker:** — The Minister for the Economy has moved first reading of Bill No. 80, *The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2012*. 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. Boyd:** — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Next sitting.

**Bill No. 81 — *The Global Transportation Hub Authority Act***

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Economy.

**Hon. Mr. Boyd:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move Bill No. 81, *The Global Transportation Hub Authority Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

**The Speaker:** — The minister has moved first reading of Bill No. 81, *The Global Transportation Hub Authority Act* be now 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. Boyd:** — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Next sitting.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

## SECOND READINGS

**Bill No. 69**

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. McMorris that **Bill No. 69 — *The Information Services Corporation Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to enter into the second reading debate on Bill No. 69, *An Act respecting Information Services Corporation*. And of course this is one that really underlines what this government is all about in so many ways, in so many ways, in terms of saying one thing and then doing another, and having this idea of accountability to the promises that they made during the campaign, this last campaign a year ago in the fall of 2011, and going back even further.

And so this is one where we see the government communications, the high speed when it comes to spin, trying to convey a story that this makes some sort of sense when it makes absolutely no sense, when you have a profitable Crown like this, that when we see just recently, yesterday, an update, a mid-year update with a razor-thin amount that every penny counts to this government.

And when they're selling this off, they're looking for everything. And as I think, as our critic has said, it really has been a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul. And here they're going to the extreme where they're going to sell off a significant Crown that is doing well, and we can only think it's because of ideological factors. To many folks, they did not see this coming. And even in the last question during question period, Mr. Speaker, we saw the question about the land surveyors who didn't think this made any sense at all. And then the minister is quite happy that one land surveyor has phoned back and said, I see your survey says one surveyor says it makes sense.

How can he feel that that reassures the public that, you know, that it's the right thing to do, that it makes any sense at all that one surveyor phoned back to say, hey, I think you're on track? But I don't think that really holds a lot of water because clearly there's too many questions and people weren't looking for this.

Quite often this fits into the pattern of this government who will do anything with their work, with the budgets. I won't use that word balanced because I think it's become a different word on that side of the House. Clearly this government is looking after any rock for anything it can sell, and promises it made during the campaign and the previous campaign are not on. And they're working very hard to whatever they can do to spin that into some sort of story that people at home might buy, but I don't think people are buying it.

They're saying, hey, this has become a significant Crown and it's one that people value. They value the idea of an Information Services Corporation that has become to be known as a good provider of important pieces of information — whether it's titles or reports, birth certificates, a whole range of maps and

surveys — that it's seen to be the right thing because these folks are impartial. They are professional and there's a sense of accountability because it's a public Crown. And if this all becomes back into the private hands, then we're not sure what may happen, what might happen. I mean, clearly we have a way of ensuring accountability because it's a Crown, and people feel safe with that. And there's a public integrity aspect to it, and I think that people have come, have really come to support that.

And we have serious, serious questions about this. And we will ask more questions as it goes along. And I know in the media, the media's even asking questions about, you know, the way that this piece of legislation is laid out. Are we really going to get the value that makes it even worthwhile? And why is this? And it seems to be more driven by ideology and perhaps testing the waters for bigger sales as that may come along.

And so they're testing the waters, and if they can spin it in a way that seems to make people believe it's less what it is, then they will push the envelope. But I don't think people are buying that. They're not buying that at all. They're saying we'd like to keep our Crowns intact. We are seeing that in the budget, a government that relies so heavily on commodities that it's important to diversify. And we've seen that yesterday, the role of the Crowns being a strong part of making us, making the government be able to make ends meet. And so when this kind of thing comes up, I think people have a lot of questions. They have a lot of questions.

And one of the questions they have is, this is a bit of a surprise. They did not campaign on this. They did not campaign on the fact that they will be, within a year of being elected, that they will be offering up a significant Crown, one of the major Crowns, for sale and they would be starting that process. And people did not know this, and I'm sure out in the public there are many folks may not even know it today. And so, Mr. Speaker, this is just one more of those surprises. And we've known for sure, that we've seen over the last few months since the last election, some major surprises foisted upon the people of Saskatchewan, not the least, not the least is the three more MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly].

[14:30]

Again these folks did not campaign on having increasing the number of MLAs in this legislature. That would've been a very interesting debate on the hustings, but this government instead chose to be quiet on that and announce that shortly thereafter. And we have some real concerns about what that really, really means. They did not campaign on it. And is this the tradition that this government will have in the next campaigns? Will they not really release the main parts of their platforms because they will do it anyways and they'll wait until after the election?

So you have the three more MLAs, and what the implications of that are: costing millions of dollars when we have other things that are much more important, you know. And a second bridge to Prince Albert comes right to mind because I know the folks . . . And so when we talk about the bridge, we know that that's something that's critically important to the people of Prince Albert, and they're not hearing anything from that government over there or the members over there. But what they are hearing is three more MLAs, five more dollars on drug costs for seniors,

the elimination of the film tax credit.

And of course we have yet to see, we have yet to see the labour, the new employment code that they did not campaign on. Where is it? We're in the dying days of the winter sitting and we're not seeing it. We're not sure we're going to see it. Is the minister retracting that or what's happening with that? We have how many, five more sitting days? Five more sitting days, three more government days, three more government dates — just three days next week — and we have not seen the employment code.

And clearly that was something that while a major, major surprise to the people of Saskatchewan, major surprise when that was announced on May 2nd in the spring because again these folks did not campaign on their massive overhaul of 15 pieces of labour legislation. And they said that it would be delivered . . . Now they did say sometime in the fall sitting, in the fall sitting. But it's going to be pretty close to the end.

And you know, ironically, this is what happened last year if I'm not mistaken. I believe that the three more MLAs legislation came . . . And it would be funny if it came on the same, the last Tuesday or the last Wednesday, yes. Now I understand actually there's only two more days this bill can be delivered — next Tuesday or Wednesday — and so I don't know what the odds are.

So, Mr. Speaker, and when we talk about the labour piece of legislation, this clearly, clearly fits the bill, about Bill 69, in that it seems to be ideologically driven. Here you have a Bill 69, and I don't know what the number of the employment code will be if it is actually delivered, but both are ideologically driven. Nobody asked for them, and they did not campaign on them. And here we have this, and this could be the beginning of major changes about how we do things in Saskatchewan, how we do things in Saskatchewan. And I think that it's alarming for people.

You know, when you look at the labour bill, the lesson the government should learn was around the consultation process that was involved. Now I do have to say it's somewhat ironic that the ministry of workplace relations is claiming that they've spent something like \$525,000 on consultations for the labour review. I find that . . . I don't know how they could have spent \$500,000 on consultations or the meetings. I mean these folks are in the province. And I don't know how many have, but if they've had 10, that's like \$50,000 a meeting. I don't know if they're paying per diems or what would be the costs.

And when we asked about this in the spring, about how much would this cost, because we didn't see it in the budget. There was no budget increase for the Ministry of Labour. And we asked about that and they said, well it's going to be able to be done all in-house and there would be no extra costs. And now we have a situation that the costs are half a million dollars. And a half a million dollars for that kind of surprise is quite something else. It's quite a surprise that they hadn't planned for. So here we have a situation with Bill 69, with ISC. Was this planned for? Did they know about this several years ago?

And we can look back, and we can look into their past annual reports. And in fact, I'll read one. This is the 2008 ISC annual

report. And at that time the Minister of Crown Corporations and I believe it was the minister from Silverwood and I would quote him directly . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Silver Springs, Silver Springs. Thank you for the corrections. Not Silver City. This is what the minister at the time said and I quote:

My priority for the future remains the same: to ensure that Saskatchewan's Crown corporations remain publicly owned and provide high quality service at a low cost. This is a promise our Government made to the people of Saskatchewan, and it is a promise we will keep.

So that member from Saskatoon, in 2008, that's what he had said about this. Our word is our bond — maybe — until it's not.

And here we have the situation . . . just a few short years how things change. So was this planned or not planned. And that's what I say about the labour review. Was that planned or not planned? You know, you have a minister who will say in the spring, we have the resources. We can do this. It's all well-planned out. And then just a few short months later, we get the bill — a half a million dollars. And I don't know how they could have planned so badly. How did they plan so badly on that? And so here we have a circumstance very parallel to this, not campaigning on it. All of a sudden this comes out and they have their spinmeisters working full-time, probably overtime. But they must have a lot if it's going to cost a half a million dollars for this. And we don't know what the costs of readying the people of Saskatchewan for the sale of ISC, what that's all about.

So clearly a broken promise and clearly a surprise and clearly something that the people of Saskatchewan don't want. And clearly something that they should have campaigned on, they should have campaigned on.

So the list is growing. The list is growing, Mr. Speaker, of things that they did not campaign on but that will change Saskatchewan fundamentally. And whether it's the three more MLAs where we now become the most, if not one of the most, highest ratio between the number of people . . . or the lowest number of people, the lowest number of people per MLAs. We were already quite low, and we see that Manitoba was way above us, Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario. Ontario's something like 100,000 people per persons, and now we're going to be something like 12,000 people per MLA.

Clearly that was a surprise. Clearly the employment code is a surprise. Clearly the film tax credit is a surprise. I haven't talked about the film tax credit, but even again, Mr. Speaker, when the numbers come out . . . And we saw what happened with the chamber of commerce actually saying this costs us, I think the number was just over \$1 million a year in terms of net costs. That clearly is something that is affordable. And yet we'll see no more films made here in Saskatchewan, no more films of the kind of stature that we had seen in the last few years, which is really, really sad, Mr. Speaker.

You know, it was interesting this summer. I was on a Canadian Parliamentary Association meeting in Quebec City, and we were doing a tour around the historic buildings, which are phenomenal. And one of the guides said, oh Saskatchewan, we love that *Corner Gas*. In fact they had a connection with

Saskatchewan. They loved watching it. It was a sense of humour. It was about who we were as a people with our own unique, quirky ways. But it really spoke in a humorous way about us and . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . It sure is. It's all about surprises. It's all about how you guys are a surprise. Surprise, surprise. It has everything to do with this bill, everything to do with this bill. They should listen, they should listen a little bit. Come on.

Let me, let me start from the beginning. Let me start from the beginning then. If they don't see the connection between ISC and the long list of surprises this government is laying out, laying out, well it's like you guys are an episode of *Corner Gas*. The government is becoming an episode of *Corner Gas*, Mr. Speaker, for sure.

Mr. Speaker, it's a long list of initiatives that this government did not campaign for, did not campaign on, the film tax credit. And maybe that struck a nerve over there, struck a nerve . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And there you go, there you go. When you kind of do that kind of stuff, it does kind of come back to bite you, you know, when you start surprising the public of Saskatchewan. And the list is growing, and ISC is part of it. ISC is clearly a part of it, Mr. Speaker. So here we are. We see a pattern. We see a pattern of a government that is being driven by ideology that won't campaign on their ideology, that will lay low and make sure nobody asks any questions.

And, Mr. Speaker, *Corner Gas* has got an awful lot to do with ISC. And I know the Minister of Finance doesn't want to draw, connect the dots, but it sure, sure does. Because people know it and they see it. And they're asking about these things all together: ISC, selling the Crowns, cutting the film tax credit, adding three more MLAs, and this new employment code. Four things, Mr. Speaker, and we could go on.

We could go on at length, go on at length about the surprises these guys have launched on the public of Saskatchewan, the things that they've launched but under the cover of getting re-elected, under the cover of being re-elected, but not mention what they really . . . what is the real agenda of the Sask Party. What is the real agenda of the Saskatchewan Party? The Sask Party is to govern by surprises. And I think sometime next week, we'll get another surprise when the employment code comes forward that cost us over half a million dollars in consultations in which no one from the public could actually come and speak. They had to write it in. They had to write it in . . .

**The Speaker:** — I'd like to remind the member speaking that the bill before us is Bill No. 69, the Information Services Corporation. And I wonder if he could address the bill, please.

**Mr. Forbes:** — Well absolutely, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the opportunity to enter into this debate because it is about connecting the dots for the people watching and people in Hansard. And I really think it's important to reflect on Bill 69 because it really does show what this government is all about.

It's about broken promises, broken promises, selling a profitable Crown and just because of being driven by ideology and something that is trumping common sense. Why are we selling, why are we selling something that is turning a profit?

Now apparently it made \$17 million last year. Clearly it's having a return. And the question is, is it worthwhile? So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to be part of this debate today and talk about the issues at hand. So as you know, Mr. Speaker, and I will talk about how this government . . . And this is I don't know if it's the biggest surprise because I know I'm the critic of Labour, and I keep going back there, but I do have to draw the parallels.

But I will reflect on this, and as I talked earlier, I'll read this into the record once again because this is a message from the minister, the 2008 ISC annual report, about what they really believe. And I would assume that their word is their bond when they put this out. I mean we didn't write this. I'm reading directly from a quote. It might've been . . . I don't know if the minister actually wrote it. I hope he read it before he signed it. It actually has his signature at the bottom. But this is what he said. This is what he had said, Mr. Speaker:

My priority for the future remains the same: to ensure that Saskatchewan's Crown corporations remain publicly owned and provide high quality services at a low cost. This is a promise our Government made to the people of Saskatchewan, and it is a promise we will keep.

[14:45]

And now we're seeing that promise being broken. Now we see this promise being broken. And, Mr. Speaker, it's not been many years since 2008, and clearly Bill 69 is the breaking point of that promise, that sacred vow the Sask Party made to the people of Saskatchewan.

And I think that's an important point, that's a critically important point for people here in Saskatchewan because, you know, when we do have elections and when we have all the things that happen between and we have these annual reports, people read them and go, okay, we take them at their word. This is what they say. They're not hedging their bets; they're not saying utility Crowns. They didn't say anything, they didn't say anything about utility Crowns in that promise. They talked about Saskatchewan Crown corporations. They didn't talk about page 44, wait till page 44 in the upcoming election. There was no asterisk. It was pretty, pretty straightforward. So what changed? What changed between then and now? What changed between then and now?

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of concerns about this Bill 69 because we think it really is indicative and it fits the behaviour pattern. And you know, it's often said, what predicts future behaviour is past behaviour. And you're seeing, Mr. Speaker, past behaviour of surprises, whether it's a film employment tax credit, three more MLAs, where they don't campaign on those things and all of a sudden they happen. All of a sudden they happen. And so we have some real concerns about this.

And it's not just ourselves. It's other folks. You know, I wouldn't mind reading parts of Murray Mandryk's column into this. This is what Mr. Mandryk said in November 20th, 2012. And you know, I think he offers some points that we should be thinking about reflecting on here, Mr. Speaker, because clearly . . . And I think the headline, it says it all: "ISC privatization case not compelling." Not compelling. It's not worth the

breaking of a promise. It's not worth the big surprise.

These folks, if they really believe in their ideology of privatization, should go out and campaign on it, should campaign on it and not be secretive about it and wait until after the election and then say, surprise, you know that promise that we've been making about not selling off Crowns or privatization? That's not true. That's not true. We actually are . . . We do have a plan, and we were just waiting until the right moment. So clearly that's what Bill 69 and . . . You know, it's funny how bill numbers stick in our mind, like Bill 5 and 6, Bill 80, and now 69 will join that, icons of famous bills that really showed what Sask Party was all about.

And so, Mr. Speaker, this is what Murray Mandryk had to say, and I'll quote extensively from this because I think this is very relevant, salient to the bill at hand. I quote:

The problem with the Saskatchewan Party's argument for privatizing Information Services Corporation (ISC) is that it's . . . [not really] that much stronger than its argument to keep it in its present, wholly owned public state.

In fact, it would probably be more to the benefit of the average Saskatchewan taxpayer to keep . . . [it] as it is. Here's why:

The obvious benefit of selling 60 per cent of the Crown corporation through a stock offering is that we'll reap \$90 million to \$120 million that ISC Minister Don McMorris says can be put . . . [forward to the] provincial infrastructure work.

Or maybe not. One of the more interesting observations about the share offering came from NDP critic Kathy Sproule, who asked: "What happens if this (new) company turns out to be like Facebook?"

And I'll continue on, but I think this is a . . . I think that's really important. Now I don't know if the Minister of Finance hates Facebook like he hates *Corner Gas*. He seems to have a real problem with *Corner Gas*. But I've got to say, we've seen what happened to Facebook. We've seen what happened to Facebook.

And you know, when you look at corporations like Facebook, and it was an amazing show of entrepreneurship when somebody had an idea . . . And of course if you've seen the movie, it's a fascinating movie about entrepreneurship and how ideas come to reality and who really has the idea and the kind of work that happens, but at some point some things happen. There's a very interesting life history to most corporations, and it was a fascinating film.

And of course the second part, which was after the film was made, is their share offering, where everybody thought that their shares would go through the roof, would go through the roof. I think they were offered \$38 a share or something like that. They started at \$38, and of course the owner of Facebook actually was just married. Mark Zuckerberg was just married before the share offering came forward and was in Europe when they did the big launch. And it crashed. And I think the shares are now in the 10 or \$13 range, something like that. About half

price anyways.

And clearly who could have predicted that? I mean there were a lot of people in the know, a lot of people who make this their business to know what to do in these kind of situations. But clearly people were hesitant about it. They were hesitant about it because, you know, the question was, does this make a lot of common sense? Should I be buying something . . . They weren't seeing the real tangible returns, I suppose. And for some reason they decided that they would hang tough, not invest in Facebook.

What would happen if that happened in this circumstance here? And this is what our critic asked, and I think it's a straightforward question. And the minister's not been really straightforward about this in terms of, are there people out there who would snap this up right away? And if they've been shopping around, then clearly they've been working on this for a bit. So I think this is an interesting question that we have to ask because, you know, when we get to keep 40 per cent of the stocks, we want to make sure it's a viable corporation. We don't want to be sunk or tied into something that's not going to work very well.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that we have to ask, wouldn't it make more sense to keep a corporation that has a return in the 15, \$17 million range per year than selling something that we might get 90 to \$120 million, that we would make in five years, just by holding the whole place, keeping it? What kind of sense does that make? What kind of sense does that make? I'm not sure.

I mean it makes ideological sense to all those folks over there. All those folks understand that because it's their ideology of privatization that's at work. That's what makes sense to them. It's not the dollars and cents that makes sense to them.

Well let's continue. The problem in an ever-changing technological world is that investors might be somewhat hesitant to plunk down their cash on a company in need of upgrades, especially if that company has only one catered provincial government client and has never really made a sale outside its jurisdiction. And that's the case, that we're going into some really uncharted waters. We're not sure what's out there.

We know the business case works well in Saskatchewan and does a good job and is meeting the marketplace needs, and the people of Saskatchewan feel very good about that. It's a one-stop shop in terms of information services, places where you can go to get your birth certificate, titles, you know. You know everything is secure. You know that there's a sense of accountability, that in Saskatchewan the tradition of public Crowns is a strong one and you can trust it.

But you're really going into some uncharted waters here, Mr. Speaker, and I think that clearly we have questions. We have a lot of questions about that and, Mr. Speaker, and if it's just . . . again whether it's the Minister of Finance looking for some ways to get some quick cash and as we see that happening both with . . . And from my background, I've been listening to the Minister Responsible for Sask Housing and selling off acres of land around Regina.

Now the answer is that she says all of that money will go into housing. And we're not sure. And we know for sure that it won't go all into housing in Regina that's for sure. The bureaucrats in the Sask Housing answered that question clearly, that Regina should not be expecting money from the sale of the northwest parcel of over 300 acres. That's going to benefit all of Saskatchewan.

So we see this liquidation of assets as a pattern for this government. They're looking for things to sell, and as my colleague from Athabasca said, if it's not nailed down or bolted down, it's going to be up for sale. We see that happen. We're starting to see that happen more and more. So it's the land. It's ISC. Now we're seeing houses for social housing up for sale. It's really a bit alarming about the kind of directions that we're going.

I'll continue here:

Moreover, if McMorris is right that other governments were frightened off from doing business with ISC because it was a 100-per-cent Saskatchewan-taxpayer-owned company, wouldn't a 40-per-cent Saskatchewan-taxpayer-owned company still be problematic?

I think that's a fair question. That's a fair question. They think they've struck this balance. But is it really going to solve the problem for someone in an ideological driven who really wants a privately owned and run company similar to ISC? Why would they be looking for a partner with the Government of Saskatchewan? You know, I mean that's an odd thing. Like who would be looking for that?

And so we have a lot of questions about that and so do other observers, and I think that's a fair question. There is another . . . and I quote:

There is another aspect of this government ownership that potential investors might see as even more of an issue. Those investors might see this 40-per-cent government ownership — and likely four . . . [of] the 10-person ISC board — as hampering them if they exercise political influence on key corporate decisions like staffing and future rate increases.

That's something to reflect on. So you've got four members of the 10-member board and a golden share, and you're not . . . I think it would be only reasonable to think that the four board members are going to be acting on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan. And when it comes to determining what the future rate increases are, I sure hope that the Government of Saskatchewan is saying, keep them low; keep them low. But that may not be the case with the other folks on the board, and say listen, it's about making a profit. It's about turning a profit here, and a significant profit. Because clearly in their private world, there is that profit motive and that's what keeps the business going. If there's no profit, then you wonder why are you doing this. And so I think that that's a fair, fair question.

And so some of these things are just not making a lot of sense. And I'll continue:



Government officials speculate that ISC might be more attractive for “safe” investors, like pension fund managers or insurance companies trying to offset riskier investments.

But lest anyone think that a privatized ISC under a 40-per-cent government ownership structure is a great deal for Saskatchewan taxpayers or consumers, think again.

To begin with, there is the discussion of additional rate hikes for land titles transactions that might be required more frequently to meet investor demands, meaning that there’s little to indicate Monday’s privatization bill will offer users much of a break.

So this is where we see another perspective on this story. Not only do we sell off a profitable Crown and we see a reduction in the return — that as Saskatchewan citizens, we might see rate increases. So here we have this problem, and we have very little control over it. We have very little control. So I think there’s a lot that we need to be thinking about here, Mr. Speaker. And I think that, as I continue through this, it’s important to really reflect on what’s at stake here and is this wise for us to be going down the road.

Now as we take our Christmas break in the next few days, I know we will be talking to a lot of people about this. And maybe that lone surveyor will be out there telling us that it’s the right thing to do. Maybe he’ll come and visit us. I don’t know. But I think that the government needs to hang their hat on more opinions than one surveyor.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I will continue here from the article:

For taxpayers as a whole, there is the temptation of recouping some of the . . . investment the previous NDP administration poured into ISC. And there is the notion of having money for capital projects, although there is reason to doubt it will be the \$90-to \$120-million the government is now speculating. But with a mere 40-per-cent ownership, there will be likely less dividends unless a privatized ISC far exceeds financial expectations.

Then there will be added costs of having to administer vital statistics through executive government — a cost that will have to be subtracted from the profitability of this privatization.

[15:00]

And, Mr. Speaker, I can just remember just a few short years ago when vital stats went over, left Health and went over to ISC. And we had concerns about that because you know, traditionally when you have that kind of change, we ask a lot of questions because we want to make sure that there are no unintended consequences. But nobody saw, nobody saw that in a few short years that vital statistics would be rebounding, bouncing back to Health. And now we heard about the land titles will be coming back to Justice.

All these things . . . And there will be costs. There will be costs. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that’s critically important that we

take that into account. And I don’t know if the minister has taken that into account because we’ve not heard a lot about it, and particularly when this government has gone through a lean initiative and has taken on that mission. I don’t know if there is a spot within Health where it can fit into in a neat way already, if they can just plug in and everything’s ready to go, or will there have to be significant infrastructure developed so that it can be part of the provincial government yet again? So there are questions we have about this.

So people were getting used to the new changes over there and were thinking of it as a valuable addition. And in fact, I was even thinking about some of the things that ISC could be doing that would be of value, you know. Mr. Speaker, as you may remember, I’ve raised often questions around photo ID [identification] and how SGI is the only place, I believe, that you can get photo ID from the government. And I was thinking, wouldn’t it be interesting for ISC to do that? But now I think that’ll be out of the range. Because we’ve had people come and say, listen, I don’t have any connections with SGI. And for whatever reason, they may not like SGI for some reason.

But I think that it would be appropriate to have two or three points within the government where you could get ID, especially now when we’ve seen the changes in election processes where you need ID. And I think it’s only fair that people have more than one choice within the government range of services. And when you have a monopoly like SGI on that little thing, and particularly when ISC has all the data, it would have made sense. But clearly now that’s out the window because it’s going to be for sale and this government seems to be heading down that road.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of questions about this, and I’m only just partially through this editorial. And I’m not sure if the members opposite have had a time. And I appreciate the opportunity to read through this, because I want to make sure . . . There’s some very good points that are made and, you know, I think that’s important that we cover this. I quote:

So, lower dividends, possibly less money from the sale of ISC than the government is suggesting and more costs to both users and taxpayers? Why would the government even bother?

Well, there is considerable logic in the notion that ISC is destined to stagnate under its current format. A decade of no out-of-province sales would seem to suggest that.

But there is also a significant statement for Premier Brad Wall in this first sale of an entire Crown corporation in a considerable amount of time.

A quiet, incremental — and most importantly, successful — privatization would do wonders to change the narrative about the need for the Crown corporations in this province. That, in turn, would be a huge victory for the conservative philosophy of smaller, less-intrusive government over the NDP/left notion favouring government delivery of services.

And that’s why I’m thinking, it’s a testing the waters. It’s a sticking the toe in the tub to see, can they do this; can they pull

this off; can they go to the electorate, get elected, and then surprise people by doing this kind of thing? Clearly they were mum, you know. And as I've read several times . . . And that's not the only one, you know.

Mr. Speaker, we've had a 75-minute debate and we had members from all over that side of the House saying all sorts of different interpretations of page 44. We've heard them say, no, it's only the utility Crowns; no, it's the only one in the Act; no, it's every one of them. I think every one of those folks have a different interpretation of what it means to protect the Crowns. And to them, what it means is just getting re-elected so they can actually sell the Crowns. That's what it really means to them.

So, in closing, this is the last paragraph: "Privatizing ISC hardly seems worth the fuss and bother. Or it would seem that way if you don't look at it from the perspective of the bigger fight."

And clearly, Mr. Speaker, when I raise *Corner Gas*, that's the bigger fight. Now, Mr. Speaker, clearly some members over there don't see the connection between *Corner Gas* and they must really hate that show. I didn't realize that they had such a dislike for it. I actually think it's kind of an interesting show. But that's the bigger fight. That's the bigger fight — the change of what Saskatchewan landscape is and what it really means in this province to solve our own unique challenges when we have a growing population.

But we need to be able to provide services in a way that people feel confident, and it's affordable and it's modern and it's up to date. There's been . . . I've not heard, I've not heard any complaints about ISC as a service provider and that it needs to be done in. In fact, people think of it as a very top-notch, state of the art corporation.

And while there were challenges . . . And, Mr. Speaker, I was a member of that committee and I remember some of the questions from the Sask Party at the time when they were in opposition about the value of it. But clearly, clearly it's come a long way. It's come a long way. And it has really fulfilled its niche in the marketplace in solving so many of the needs that people have. And I think there is ways for it to do more. But to do this kind of thing, Mr. Speaker, is very, very wrong-headed, but not surprising, as I said, with this government in terms of the way it operates.

So I know many of my friends will want to get into this debate and will want to talk about this because it is one that we feel very, very strongly about when we see . . . And I think that in the column I read by Murray Mandryk from the 20th of November, that we are worried about what this really means. And is this a Trojan Horse? Is this much more than just one sell, one sale? We see it with the sell-off of the lands, the Sask Housing lands, the social housing, and under the guise that it will refresh the inventory, refresh the inventory. But really, clearly, when you're asking people to move out of their homes they've lived in, many of them for several, several years in strong, safe, vibrant communities and into apartments, I have some real concerns. I have real concerns.

And so, Mr. Speaker, that the whole idea that this government, as I said, to me . . . Now I know others will get up and have a longer list but, you know, as I've said, we've had four major

surprises from this government that they did not campaign on, did not campaign on. And people are wondering what else, what else is going to happen. And whether it's the three more MLAs they didn't campaign on, the film employment tax credit they didn't campaign on, the sell-off of the houses, and the employment code . . . And now actually, Mr. Speaker, there are five — five — and the fifth one is the ISC. And the fifth one is ISC.

It's a pattern. It's a pattern, and it's one that's indicating that what they've done in the past, and if they can get away with it, they'll continue to do with it. And these clearly have been shown. They're more ideologically driven, ideologically driven than driven by common sense.

And so, Mr. Speaker, with that, I know other members will want to get up and speak a bit about this and other bills that are before us today, but I'm glad that I was able to get on record my thoughts that I will not be supporting this bill, that there will be lots of questions on this in committee. And we will be talking to lots of people over the months ahead about Bill 69 that now joins the infamous ranks of Bills 5, 6, and 80. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of Bill 69, an Act to request Information Services Corporation. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 69, *The Information Services Corporation Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

### Bill No. 71

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that **Bill No. 71** — *The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2012/Loi de 2012 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la réglementation des boissons alcoolisées et des jeux de hasard* be now read a second time.]

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill No. 71, which is *The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2012*. And in this Act there's a number of amendments to the 1997 Act, the alcohol and gaming Act, and it's part of a comprehensive package that the minister introduced in regards to some changes generally to the alcohol and gaming regulations as they currently exist.

At first blush, Mr. Speaker, these appear to be some simple, administrative-type changes that will, as the minister tried to explain, reduce red tape for Saskatchewan businesses. And I think in general that's something that we see this government doing a lot. And I guess in some ways it seems appropriate, but I do have some concerns about this because there's always a balance, Mr. Speaker. And when you start removing red tape or barriers, I think sometimes it's important to realize that they were there for a reason in the first place, and there was a public policy purpose for those regulations to be enacted.

And sometimes regulations can seem cumbersome, but when you're talking about alcohol and gaming, I think these are areas that are very sensitive in our communities and are the source of a great deal of addiction issues, Mr. Speaker. So this is not something that should be undertaken lightly.

The minister has indicated that, and she certainly in her press release listed a whole number of changes that are going to be recommended as part of their work to remove red tape for businesses. And I think we just need to take a very careful look at that. Certainly the survey that she did with people in the industry was, as she listed and described who they were, was stakeholders in the industry. So permitted restaurants and taverns, manufacturers of brew pubs and wineries, festival organizers, people who actually apply for permits. It doesn't identify in this case any consultation with representatives of the groups she was talking about today, for example, Mr. Speaker, like MADD or other organizations that are working to reduce alcohol addictions or help people with those addictions.

So I'm not sure why she wouldn't have consulted with people who have concerns and for whom these laws are intended to protect. So it's a bit of a concern that she's limited it to people in the business of selling alcohol, but she did not consult with people who are dealing with the results of alcoholism which is a terrible problem here in Saskatchewan. We heard about that today in question period.

At any rate, some of the changes she's identified, they're trying to balance the needs of private businesses, modernize the regulations with a need to ensure that the sale continues in a socially responsible manner, and certainly some of the changes that she's proposing are indeed along those lines. But I think the government needs not to be too hasty in dealing with making things easier for businesses, especially when it comes to the sale of alcohol. So I hope that there's been a temperate approach to this — and I use that term deliberately, Mr. Speaker — and that this is a serious issue and needs to be treated very seriously.

So she outlined the number of changes that she will be looking at, and I'll get into those in a minute. At the very end of her comments she talked about two changes in the bill that will enhance SLGA's ability to continue to contribute to public safety. Again I'm going to speak specifically to those changes. I'm not sure they actually hit the mark, and may actually create some problems for businesses indeed in interpreting them and also in carrying them out. And again it's not clear to me what the public policy change is here that's trying to be achieved. So those are two things I will speak to when I get to the end of the Act itself.

[15:15]

For the first change that they're proposing is an amendment of section 2 of the 1997 Act, and basically what this clause is attempting to do is to allow catering businesses to be included in the definition of a permitted premise. And I think this is something that caterers are looking for. It will allow them to provide a more full menu, I guess, of their services, so that they can actually serve alcohol at events that they're serving through their catering business. So this is . . . Now what it's going to do is accommodating changes to *The Alcohol Control Regulations*, and even though they don't have an establishment that's

permitted, they will be included in the definition of permitted premises. So I think that makes a lot of sense, Mr. Speaker, and don't really have any issues with that.

The next change is to section 49(1) in the existing Act, and that's section 4 of the Bill. And what this does is a couple of things, and I've been through this process a few times myself when applying for permits in an outdoor facility. And what happens there, Mr. Speaker, currently if you go to the SLGA to apply for a permit, they're going to say, where's your municipal approval for this permit? And so then if you haven't already, didn't realize you needed that, you need to give them 60 days — or sorry, it was a year earlier — but you have to get permission from the municipality before you can apply for the permit. And so the changes that are being made now, this is going to simplify the application process for a new permit by removing the requirement that SLGA publish notice in the *Gazette* . . . Oh, sorry, this is a different provision. This is one where the SLGA has to publish notice in the *Gazette* when there isn't a store or permitted premises in a community for more than 60 days.

So publishing in the *Gazette* is a fairly technical and administrative process that likely is not of note for the public in terms of notice any more. I think it may have lost some of its validity. And certainly having the notice provided in newspapers, or what the new section does is just refer to the notice provisions in section 62 of the Act. And in there, you know, I'll just read section 62 of the existing Act, and it has to be published "once each week for two successive weeks in a daily or weekly newspaper published: in the municipality . . . [itself or] in Saskatchewan and circulating in the municipality" because often municipalities may not have their own newspaper or weekly paper.

So that's probably a sufficient way of giving notice for these types of changes and this is where a permit is being applied for, for premises located where there haven't been premises for some time. Seems fairly administrative. It's probably not a big issue. So that type of thing makes a lot of sense.

The other thing that the amendment does is it takes down the limit from one year to 60 days. This is one of those ones I guess where you would question what was the original public policy for 100 days, or sorry, one year, and why the ministry is thinking now two months or 60 days is sufficient. And it would just be curious, I think, to go into the history of the original bill and find out why somebody thought one year was good. But now the powers that be and the policy people have decided that two months is adequate.

So I think this would make it easier for permits to be issued in the municipalities. I'm not sure how these apply to areas where people are concerned about alcohol and perhaps don't want permitted premises in their community. Again this is a juxtaposition of these types of business-friendly changes against the issues that communities face when it comes to the evils and the illness of alcohol when it presents itself as a serious concern and disease for some people.

So again we're not sure from her comments whether she actually consulted with people that deal in addictions and with alcohol-related issues, but she certainly did consult with the

business community. And we would be concerned to know that the balance was there in terms of the consultations. So it's easier to get a licence in a community that hasn't had a licence. Whether that's a good thing from the point of view of people working with people with addictions, we're not sure. We don't see any evidence of that in her consultations.

The next change is section 5, and it's repealing in whole section 55 of the existing Act. I don't have any issue with this change at all. All that section said was that the price lists were to be posted. Well, I'll read you the existing section. It says, "Every permittee shall post in a prominent place on the permitted premises a price list showing all prices for beverage alcohol fixed by the authority." I'm not sure what purpose that would have served. Again it would be interesting to know what the public policy thinking was in saying you've got to print and publish the price list. Maybe to make sure that nobody was cheating you or shorting your drinks or perhaps overcharging. Who knows. But I think now consumers, if they want to know what the price is, all they have to do is ask.

And I guess there's certain prices fixed by the authority for which premises must charge, but the explanation here says that "Permittees will continue to be required to provide customers with the amount of alcohol in a mixed drink." So they still have to give the customers the amount but they no longer have to list the prices. So I guess they can charge whatever they want and if you're willing to pay then it's all good.

The next change is section 6 of the new bill, and that is relating to the suitability of premises. So there's some changes being made to existing section 56. And what it's doing here is that currently permit applicants have to give SLGA copies of compliance with applicable fire, health, and safety standards. And what the amendment is doing is saying no longer will they have to provide SLGA with the demonstration of compliance, and all they need now, all SLGA is requiring now is a written statement that they complied.

And this is one of the examples, Mr. Speaker, where I think there might be some concerns from a public policy perspective, because what it's doing is it's taking SLG [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming] out of the picture. SLG is no longer responsible for ensuring that those fire, health, and safety standards are complied with. That solely rests now upon the permittee themselves. And yes, the permittee is responsible and should have some, I guess, liability to ensure that they are following the rules, however for SLG to walk away from that is also of concern and I think needs some further examination. And we would certainly be looking to folks in the community and those that are listening to tell us whether they think that SLGA should remove itself from this obligation.

And I think the explanation here, it states that it "will clarify that SLGA is not legally liable where the applicant provides false information to SLGA respecting compliance with applicable fire, health and safety standards." And certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not aware of any situations where someone can be held liable when someone else gives false information. I don't think SLGA could ever be held liable if information has been provided that's false.

But this goes further than that. It says not only do they not have

to provide the information anymore, all they have to provide is a written statement saying that they've complied, which I think takes it way further than it perhaps needs to go. And I know whenever you're filling out a form and you're required to submit documents like your passport, you know, you do those things and then you know darn well you've complied because you've gone through the process and you don't get your permit or your passport or whatever you're applying for unless you give all the documentation that's required.

For SLG to say, oh don't bother sending us your fire and safety standard compliance; we don't need to see that anymore. All we need is for you to sign on a piece of paper saying that you've done it — that's a big step, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I think this is kind of opening the door for businesses to, if they're in a hurry, they're trying to get their doors open, they're trying to get everything done, and they say, oh well we'll get the fire compliance later. We just want to get the licence. And it's opening a door, I think, that perhaps shouldn't be opened. And it's also, I think, being done for the wrong reason, because SLGA likely would not be liable if someone gives them false information. How can you be liable when somebody lies to you? So that's another . . . There's some questions, I think, about that proposed change to the Act.

The next one is section 7, and this is dealing with public notice of permit applications. And this is only for businesses that . . . This is for catering businesses. So now that they're being included in the definition of permitted premises, they obviously wouldn't need to hang up a public notice of their permit because they're operating out of a more private place, and they're taking the food wherever they're catering. So it wouldn't be necessary for them to demonstrate a public notice of their application. They're only being allowed to serve alcohol at catered events. And so there's no concerns that this section 62, the original section 62, would arise out of that. So I think that's something that I don't have any further comment on. It seems to make sense if you're going to include catering businesses in the definition of a permitted premise.

So now we get into some of the more maybe interesting changes. Section 75, I think this will be of interest to people who golf at least, because those who golf now, what the changes being proposed will allow golf courses to serve customers alcohol in closed containers for consumption on site. And I think on a hot day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's nothing worse than a flat beer. So I can see why this change will make a lot sense for people that golf. And certainly you want to be able to engage in the beverage when you feel like it. And if it's sitting there open for half an hour, it won't be all that appealing any more. So I think that doesn't change the . . . rock the world a whole lot.

And furthermore the section . . . The amendments that are being proposed are going to allow customers to request permittees to recork beer similarly where customers can now ask to recork unfinished bottles of wine. So that's just . . . Now that we have a larger beer market, I think, that has the corking of beer, then again those kinds of changes make total sense and I don't think would raise any public policy issues. However I guess we'll see what happens on the golf course once this change is made, and if there's golfers running amok because they have not opened their beer containers, I'm sure the government will take note of

that, but it's highly unlikely.

The next change is section 9 that's being proposed in the bill. And I'm just going to flip over the page here. All they're doing is a wee, small change there, and it allows an option being created to let consumers bring their own wine to consume with the meal. This is something I've enjoyed the opportunity to do in Quebec actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's something that I think allows consumers more choice. The business is still allowed to charge a corkage fee, so they get their profit off of it, but the people can choose their own wine if they have a special beverage that they like to drink. Again I don't think on a public policy level this is a big change, and so this is not something that would require a whole lot of review and comment. So that's section, sorry, that's section 8 of the new bill, consumption on premises.

And of course it clarifies that customers cannot remove alcohol from the premises unless it was purchased from an off-sale. So that's another clarification and that's the changes that are proposed to section 8.

Section 9, yes that's the one where wine is allowed to be consumed with a meal. Then section 10 is actually a proposed new section which also goes along with section 9. It's a complementary section, and that's the one where they can bring their own bottle of wine. And now section 11 is changing section 124, again just to accommodate the new section 116.2 where customers can bring their own bottle of wine into the restaurant.

And then we get into section 12, and I think this is one where there's some actually serious policy considerations that need to be looked at closely. And this is where no person . . . The amendments clarify that permittees and their employees will be able to allow an intoxicated individual to remain in the premises until a safe ride can be arranged. And there's standards now that are being developed by SLGA to support this amendment.

So we certainly will need to see what those policies that SLGA's developing will look like, but I think the concern here from a business perspective is that what happens if there is no safe ride? What happens if it's two in the morning? And is the business owner then expected to remain and supervise this intoxicated individual until they're no longer intoxicated? And so is it adding an additional burden and liability on the business owner to basically babysit an intoxicated individual? Certainly we don't want them sending them out into the rain and snow without a proper ride home or that they choose to drive themselves home, but this is rife with I think legal danger, no matter how you approach this, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So currently they're required to remove the individual. Now they're allowed to let them stay, but what does allow mean? Is there a legal obligation to now let them stay? Or if the individual insists on leaving even though they're clearly intoxicated, you know, is there further obligations on the part of the business owner?

[15:30]

So this is something I think that will probably hit the courts at some point because of the uncertainty in the liability of the

business owner. And I'm not sure this would clarify that, although we'll wait and see what the policies are that SLGA's developing to see if that indeed accomplishes what they're trying to do.

Now the new section, section 13, deals with a new section. Or sorry, section 128 of the existing Act is now being amended. And the amendments will increase accountability for permittees for illegal activity taking place near establishments. This again is something I'm not sure if I was a business owner I'd be too happy about because illegal activity is a choice of the patrons, and requiring the permittee to supervise the activity of the permittees is something that I think is going to be very difficult. For example, when an illicit drug deal is taking place in a bar, is the permittee or the bar owner required to make sure that none of these activities take place? And if they don't stop those activities, you know, then what are they supposed to do? Are they supposed to call the police? And are they going to be held liable if those activities take place? So it's not clear to me.

What the section's suggesting is that the permittee has a duty to curtail the activity, for example, calling the police. That could be something that may put some permittees in danger, and I think requiring business owners to be responsible for people doing criminal activity in their business would be something as a business owner I think I'd be really uncomfortable with. I'm not sure. And I'm trying to think of other situations. But for example, it's like saying shoplifting in a store is the responsibility of the business owner to stop shoplifting. Well certainly I think they'd be motivated to stop it because they're losing their own merchandise. But there's probably other situations. You're sitting in a park and you're a pool supervisor in a swimming pool or a park worker and you see illegal activity going on in a park. Are you going to be held to the same standard?

So this seems a bit strange, and I'm not sure that the explanation from the minister is one that's really complete and sufficient. What if it happens in the parking lot, for example, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Obviously calling the police is something that is an easy answer for some of these things. But you know, if you have a suspicion that something illegal's going on, do you call the police, or do you have to actually know that something's illegal is going on? So this is something I think that the minister may have . . . Maybe this section will raise more questions than it answers. And I'm not sure what sort of liabilities it's imposing on the business owner, or the permittee in this case, that I'm not sure this will be entirely welcome by those business owners.

So I think that's the basic gist of the changes in the bill. I just have a few comments about the timing of this bill and certainly some of the things we're hearing in the news these days about alcohol. Certainly last week we heard stories about huge problems with drinking, for example, in the city of Prince Albert. And there's all kinds of work being done from the people working in health and addictions, dealing with the issue, but the problem is growing. And what we see is that, although we've been told by the Minister of Public Safety that there's always room at the inn in terms of corrections, there certainly is not room at the inn when it comes to detox centres. And that's the first level for people who are struggling with an alcohol addiction, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So we see a government introducing sweeping changes to alcohol and gaming regulations, making it easier and reducing red tape. But we don't see really any effort being made by this government to ensure that those who suffer from alcoholism and addictions are being assisted at all. We heard that the number of public intoxication arrests in Prince Albert are going up, and the news stories are saying that the city of Prince Albert, for example, is losing battle with the bottle. We also know that there are other communities that have similar problems.

And you know, it's just a shame that these laws and these changes had to be introduced the same day in this legislature that some young people came and made a presentation to members about their concerns with alcohol abuse in their age category. And really, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the timing was quite inappropriate. And it was something that I think this government was so anxious to defer media attention on their changes to ISC that they decided, oh well, let's just introduce some new liquor changes then. And it was very insensitive I think, Mr. Speaker, to those young individuals who came and made a heartfelt presentation about problems with alcohol in their age group. And this is also coming from a party who's decided that maybe the drinking age should be lowered.

So we see all that, and then we juxtapose that with stories in today's news about the number of deaths related, on the highways, to drinking and driving. There's a disconnect here, Mr. Speaker. And I think that this government is, you know, being driven by forces that don't take into account the true social picture of what's going on with alcohol in this province. And it's unfortunate that that's had to happen and that we're seeing all these stories come out where, you know, the number of deaths on the highways, for example.

Why is that happening in 2012? I mean I remember when I was young, and that was a common occurrence. And every year around graduation parties in my area of the province, there'd be a fatal accident of some young people. And I thought that was going down, and now what we hear in the news is that it's back up. Alcohol and youth and alcohol and people with additions, there's still serious, serious problems.

So what really should be done is more of a focus, I think at least some focus, on ensuring the people have access to the resources they need to get themselves well. And if that is a detox centre as a first line of defence, absolutely let's make sure that's available. If it's tougher penalties for drinking and driving . . . And that's not just for the people that are, you know, having problems with alcohol. That's for safety of the public and families that are driving on the roads. There's all kinds of areas here I think where this government is sort of missing the mark.

And yes, it's fine to rejuvenate or modernize the way alcohol is being consumed in our province, but I think there's a corresponding responsibility for this government to ensure that those with need, those with addictions and illness related to alcohol, families that are suffering are taken care of and also have access to the services that they need so that it reflects the balance that's required. This seems to be quite imbalanced, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And we'll look to this government for more leadership in that

area because we certainly don't see it right now, especially when they're making more money and especially when they're privatizing liquor and gaming outlets as well — in particular, liquor stores. We're losing the profits that would go to help people with detox programs. And it's just another sort of sell-off to people rather than ensuring that our government has the revenues it needs to ensure that people with illnesses and sicknesses related to alcohol and other additions are being helped in I think what should be a compassionate society.

At any rate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your attention. And at this point, I think that's the extent of my comments on this bill. So at this point I would like to adjourn debate on Bill No. 71 which is *An Act to amend The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act, 1997*.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member from Saskatoon Nutana has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 71, *The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

#### Bill No. 72

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that **Bill No. 72 — *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2012*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter the debate on Bill No. 72, *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2012*. The minister gave second reading a few days ago here, and I'd just like to talk a little bit about what this bill proposes to do and what it's coming out of, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This summer there was a horrible, awful, tragic death. Ashley Dawn Richards was a young flag person who lost her life in a construction zone due to speeding, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So this government has chosen to implement a suite of changes to ensure to try to address speeding in orange zones.

And it's not just under *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act*, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The minister outlined that:

. . . the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure made changes that will see rumble strips being used in prioritized work zones, and gates that narrow the approach to work zones being installed. [And also] These measures are intended to ensure motorists are aware they are nearing a work zone and to help slow traffic to 60 kilometres per hour in work zones when highway workers are present.

[As well the minister had outlined that] . . . SGI worked with the Ministry of Justice to increase the fines for speeding when passing a highway worker to triple the base fine for speeding. These increases make Saskatchewan's fines for speeding in construction zones

among the highest in the country and will be [the minister says] a deterrent to motorists speeding in areas where highway workers are present.

So that's been a part of the suite of measures to ensure people are not speeding in construction zones and putting people's lives at risk.

But with this particular bill, Bill No. 72, *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act*, it has a couple of pieces that I would like to talk about. One of the things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister outlined is that this bill "... will allow for the use of photo radar, only in work zones where highway workers are present, to charge drivers exceeding 60 kilometres per hour when passing a highway worker." So that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a good thing.

Again an awful ... I can't even imagine for Ashley Dawn Richards's family how very tragic it was lose their daughter, their sister, their fiancé. It was not a very good thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But the one thing actually, interestingly enough in question period today, we were talking about highway deaths, not just in orange zones. But this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so far, and it's not even the end of November yet, 146 deaths on our highways here in Saskatchewan, and that's still with another month remaining in our calendar year. And according to the RCMP, that is actually some of the highest numbers we've seen in recent history, and the RCMP are concerned that still with another month left that we are going to be at record highway deaths.

And I'd just like to outline what RCMP had said today here. Mr. MacRae, or the RCMP officer had said:

"Drinking and driving is the main thing we need to work on. Couple that with seat-belt use and intersection infractions, those are the big three. Those are the areas that we need to focus," said MacRae.

But he said, "Drinking and driving is the main thing we need to work on."

One hundred and forty-six deaths on our highways so far this year, many of them connected to impaired driving, is not acceptable. And we in the opposition appreciate the work that the government has done in making orange zones safer and believe that that's absolutely imperative. And we've been supportive of those changes. But when we look at the province-wide numbers — 146 people who have families, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, friends — 146 people have lost their life this year. This is, I think, worthy of addressing, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I don't want to be prescriptive and say exactly what we need to be doing, but clearly the suasion campaigns — and I'm a big believer in suasion as one of the tools in your public policy tool kit — but suasion hasn't been doing what it needs to do. I know SGI and Liquor and Gaming do ads. I know the minister today talked about RID which has been a very good program. Actually my colleague from Massey Place and I, just last year when we were on the road, on the highway coming

back from Melfort to Saskatoon, had to use the RID program and believe it's a very important thing. But clearly when we've had 146 fatalities on our highways this year, there is more to be done.

And you know other, Mr. Deputy Speaker, other provinces have looked at issues in their own jurisdictions and how they can step up to the plate to try to address impaired driving. And again I don't want to be prescriptive, but I would like the minister and the Premier to take this issue seriously, more seriously than they have, and work with law enforcement officers and others who can maybe come up with a suite of options to address impaired driving on our highways.

I know that again they've come up with hopefully an effective set to deal with speeding in orange zones, but let's see what we can do around impaired driving. I know, I believe in both BC [British Columbia] and Alberta, one of the things ... Again I don't want to be prescriptive, but I'd just like to put on the record one of the things that BC and Alberta are doing for their new drivers is that you're not allowed to have any alcohol in your blood before you receive ... You can't even have had one drink. You can have no alcohol in your blood. If you have any alcohol in your system, you will receive an automatic suspension.

[15:45]

That is different than here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I think about that 17-year-old who maybe snuck a six-pack from mom and dad's fridge or got the key to the liquor cabinet and took it to the party and hit the road. And even if they just had one or two drinks, depending on their size, their weight, their body's ability to metabolize alcohol, even one or two drinks could put them over that, could put them in the range of impairment. And a 17-year-old, first of all, shouldn't be drinking at all, but the reality is that is happening.

So I think that looking at Alberta and BC who have said, zero tolerance and no alcohol for new drivers is something that we could look at. Again I don't want to be prescriptive, but let's look at best practices. And we do have some good things here in the province. There's no doubt about it.

But let's look at what other jurisdictions are doing and thinking about how they could enhance the work that we do here in Saskatchewan to reduce that number of fatalities. One hundred forty-six people have died so far on our highways this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Families who are impacted by that, it is absolutely devastating. I'm the mother of young kids and one of them actually is getting pretty close to being the age of driving. She'll be 15 this spring, and she will be getting her learner's licence. And I'm actually dreading that a little bit, but we all have to come into our own at some point in time. And even now she drives with her cousin, who is 18 years old and is a very responsible, great kid. But I worry about them. Mothers worry all the time.

But I worry when my niece picks up my daughter from dancing — she likes to help me out — and they'll go to Tim Hortons at 11 o'clock at night sometimes just to go have an iced capp and visit. That'll be on a Friday night. This is their social night sometimes together. My older niece, who has her driver's

licence, and her sister and then my daughter like to spend time together. And they drive at times where people perhaps are drinking more than they should, and people sometimes don't use the best judgment and get behind the wheel of their car.

So I worry about my daughter, who's awesome and has good judgment. And I hope she continues to have good judgment. And her cousin is wonderful, but unfortunately you can't always count on everybody else having such good judgment. So I believe that there should, and we here in the opposition think that the government should be looking seriously at how to tighten and enhance the prevention, well, tighten some of the rules and enhance prevention of impaired driving.

Like I said, I worry about my daughter. And it's not my daughter that I'm worried about and her judgment, but I do worry about many other people's judgment. And they just happen to be out at times where people do things that they shouldn't do, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So again, this isn't about being prescriptive and about the opposition saying, you should be doing exactly this. But what you do when you create good public policy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you talk to people who are on the front lines. First of all, the RCMP or any police service, what do they think would work well to prevent, to lower rates of impaired driving and change the culture in some respects? And I think it's changed over the years, but I think we still have much work to do in that regard. So let's talk to the people on the front lines, and then let's look across Canada and see where we are.

We are doing better in some regards and with respect to some of the policies that we have in place, but we are not leading in other areas, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I think we need to examine those and think about those. I think 146 deaths on our highways — on our highways this year alone, and it's not even the end of December — is absolutely, completely, unacceptable. And again, as we've commended the government on the work that they've done around the orange zones, I think that I would encourage them to take some leadership in this regard when it comes to impaired driving.

The devastation . . . I had a friend actually in high school who I lost due to a drunk driving accident actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Kids, young people who were driving, doing something — speeding, drinking, all the things that you should not do when you're behind the wheel of tons of metal. And I believe that there are many more things that we should be looking at to strengthen our impaired driving laws and prevent. The best things you can do . . . This isn't just about enforcement, although enforcement might be one of the tools, but there's no silver bullet in a policy package, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There are many things that we need to look at around suasion. And the minister talked a lot about suasion, which is all the ads that we have on, whether they're on the Internet or TV. And that's one part of a tool kit, one part of the tool kit. And there is the RID, report impaired driving.

And as I said, my colleague from Massey Place and I had the opportunity, the unfortunate opportunity to use that program to call the RCMP. I mean it was unfortunate that we had to report

a drunk driver, but not unfortunate that the program exists. And it was on the highway. We were coming back from Melfort, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it was scary. We were trying to keep track of this driver going highway speeds in front of us, who clearly was impaired in some fashion, not quite sure how or why — was it health, was it alcohol, was it other drugs? But we were all, there were three of us in the car and we were all very nervous about getting too close to the driver, but trying to keep the driver in our sight so we could better help the RCMP in finding this individual. So we had to stay on this very much closer than we would have liked to stay. So the RID is a great program and we wouldn't diminish it all.

But public policy, there is no silver bullet, no matter what the issue or the problem is. It is about a suite of options, many different ways of addressing a concern. And the government has done this around orange zones: the rumble strips, the photo radar, increasing the base fines. Those are all good things and the government needed to do that. But again I can't highlight this enough — 146 deaths, which the RCMP has attributed many of them to impaired driving. And it says that's the number one thing that we have to deal with. And they've highlighted other things as well, but have said if we can address impaired driving, that number should come down.

And you know, I know the minister in her scrum talked about, oh we've got an increased population and increased accidents. That is not acceptable. We need to build a culture of absolute . . . People should not be driving impaired, and we need to ensure that we have the proper mechanisms in place. When your population grows, you need to ensure that people maybe who come from other places where maybe drinking and driving is more tolerated, that when people come to Saskatchewan this is a place that we are not willing to have people put others at risk. Families and the devastation to communities where you've lost someone in your life to drinking and driving, you know the devastating effect that that has, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So with respect to bill no . . . I've forgotten which bill no. . . . Bill No. 72, Mr. Deputy Speaker — they all kind of blend together after a while — but this is *An Act to Amend the Traffic Safety Act* which will . . . One of the pieces is around photo radar. But I appreciate and commend the government for doing this, but I think we need to apply the strategy around fatalities on our highways to also address impaired driving, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So with that I would like to move to adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Saskatoon Riversdale has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 72, *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

### Bill No. 73

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Reiter that **Bill No. 73** — *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012* be now read a second time.]



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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure this afternoon to have the opportunity to enter debate on Bill No. 73, *An Act to amend The Municipalities Act*.

Mr. Speaker, this is a fairly lengthy amendment to the Act. A number of different components are addressed. The Act itself is substantial, as one might expect when dealing with something as important and far-reaching as the municipalities and how the rules are structured for their smooth operation.

So the amendment that's been put forward today, Mr. Speaker, as the minister outlined in his second reading speech, touches on a number of areas: some fairly substantial, some a bit more minor, and some of an administrative or a housekeeping nature, Mr. Speaker.

First off, it's of course when we're dealing with municipalities, it's important to get the legislation right. We can think of the different orders of government: federal, provincial, and municipal. And I know from my own experience when out door knocking, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure members on both sides of the House have had similar experiences, to the average constituent on the doorstep, often they don't differentiate between what is a municipal or a provincial or a federal responsibility. And sometimes the issues that come forward as a provincial politician or to a provincial politician really are more about services or concerns at the municipal level, and then sometimes also at the federal level.

So we know that, you know, based on my own experience and I'm sure the experience of many members, we know that municipalities certainly matter because it's through municipalities that people often have their most obvious points of contact with an order of government. And it's often the things which may seem minor that actually affect people in a major way and can also irritate people in a major way when they don't go quite right. And so when you think of whether it's minor things like garbage collection or recycling programs or how often a road is plowed, these are the issues that are often top of mind because they're the things that people think about on a daily basis or on a weekly basis as they go about living their busy lives.

So we know that when we address anything at the municipal level, it's most certainly important to keep that in mind, that we're not talking about some abstract order of government that doesn't matter — not that any order of government is that way. I would say any level of government where there are elected people who are chosen by their neighbours is most certainly a very, very important order of government.

But it's important to remember the things that we do, the changes that we make affect people in a very real way, in a way that is felt in their everyday lives. And we should always strive to ensure that the legislative framework that we put in place for municipalities to act is one that serves their best interests and serves the interests of that order of government and serves the interests of our constituents, because there is only one constituent. Whether the perspective is municipal, provincial, or federal or the school board level, we know that these are

Saskatchewan people and their concerns are very important.

So as the minister outlined not too long ago, Mr. Speaker, in his second reading speech — it was just on the 27th which does happen to be yesterday, Mr. Speaker — he outlined the changes that this amendment is proposing to make. And so I'd like to walk through some of these different steps in order to ensure that we have a decent understanding of what is happening in this piece of legislation.

First off, Mr. Speaker, as the minister identified in his speech and having had the chance to go through some of the different amendments, we know how important it is, Mr. Speaker, to have a second reading speech that is clearly articulated . . . Well a second reading speech that clearly articulates the proposed amendments in order to flesh out some of the ideas that are put forward in the legislation. I know for many individuals it is a very useful tool to have the second reading speech to help decipher or interpret what each of the changes mean in different aspects of the proposed piece of amendment legislation.

So first off, Mr. Speaker, as the minister suggested, his proposal in this legislation is he believes that it will improve processes related to the boundary alterations or annexations for the municipalities involved in the Saskatchewan Municipal Board and to support government's growth strategy. So a bit of politics mixed in there with the stated intention, and that's fine. This is the legislature, so politics I suppose should be here. But, Mr. Speaker, that was the first objective identified in these amendments.

The second is the minister highlighting that “. . . they respond to specific requests from the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities and the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association.” So we know, Mr. Speaker, for the rural municipalities that are organized through SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and the urban ones through SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] as we commonly call them, Mr. Speaker, it's important to highlight the role that these organizations play in providing information to the provincial government with respect to what are the concerns of an area and what processes should be in place in order to ensure the better operation, a smoother operation of events at the municipal level. So it's important, Mr. Speaker. I do fully support obviously the work of SARM and SUMA in providing that information to government, and that's the kind of discussions that we should have. When either through SUMA or SARM ideas are brought forward, it's appropriate for the provincial government to listen closely to what those ideas are, and it's essential that there be a productive and a co-operative relationship between the organizations and government.

[16:00]

The third component that the minister identifies is “. . . they support the intent of agreements such as the New West Partnership Agreement and the Agreement on Internal Trade in areas such as business licensing and municipal procurement.” This is the idea, Mr. Speaker, that as a result of the provincial government entering into agreements with other provinces as identified through the New West Partnership, which of course would encompass the Western provinces, and also the

Agreement on Internal Trade, Mr. Speaker, these were steps taken — we've had discussions on the floor of the Assembly about these steps — that in a general sense are aimed at providing more consistency in regulations across jurisdictions in order to support the actions of governments and to ensure that organizations, whether businesses or other types, non-profits, whatever the case may be, Mr. Speaker, have a more common set of rules across jurisdictions.

As with anything, there are pros and cons to an argument, and in discussing any piece of legislation that changes the rules at the local level, there is a balanced approach that is required. And we know that while co-operation and coordination is most certainly important, it's also important, Mr. Speaker, in certain circumstances, to maintain local priorities as local leaders and local communities identify them. So that's the balancing that needs to occur in order to ensure that steps take place that do improve the actual process and at the same time don't erode the well-being of local communities.

But anyway the amendments that are being proposed in this piece of legislation speak to that aspect with respect to . . . Because there have been agreements that have been entered into by the provincial government, there are implications at the municipal level.

And the final area, Mr. Speaker, is that the proposed amendments in this piece of legislation address:

. . . they address other requests from across the municipal sector to clarify wording and improve consistency among the municipal Acts regarding primarily administrative matters and make other changes identified by the ministry to clarify areas such as education property tax reporting, licence fees, and purchasing policies.

So, Mr. Speaker, the notion that across the different aspects of legislation that affect municipalities that there ought to be consistency in the types of language used and the expressions and the intent with different aspects as it relates to tax reporting, licensing fees, and purchasing policies. So increased consistency so that elected bodies at the municipal level, whether at the RM [rural municipality] level or in different parts of the province, Mr. Speaker, have a similar vocabulary and understanding of concepts, I would imagine is what the suggestion is coming at.

And when there is . . . Earlier on in my remarks, I talked about the housekeeping nature of legislation as well. And it is appropriate, Mr. Speaker, from time to time as issues come up and as the hard-working people within the ministries review legislation and identify inconsistencies or as feedback is received from the municipal level with respect to legislation, that there be an opportunity to look at the different Acts and see how well they complement one another and what sort of consistency there is with the language and the terms.

So again, Mr. Speaker, if it is of, as the minister suggests, as I would read in his second reading remarks, that it is of an administrative nature and mostly about consistency, at face value, Mr. Speaker, that would seem reasonable because it is appropriate. Any piece of legislation evolves over time and there are changes that occur. And over the years and sometimes

over the decades, Mr. Speaker, there can be inconsistencies which need to be corrected. And that is fine in most circumstances, the catch being, Mr. Speaker, is if there is a circumstance where there is an issue that goes beyond an administrative change or a language change. That can be an issue if it goes deeper and we're not properly looking at the issue at hand. So we can look at a few of the different components.

So to recap, Mr. Speaker, this legislation is outlining changes in four broad areas that affect municipalities. One has to do with annexations and how that works. The second has to do with feedback that's been received from SARM and SUMA, that's the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities and the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association. The third area, Mr. Speaker, has to do with changes that are required in the legislation because of the New West Partnership and the Agreement on Internal Trade, implications at the municipal level, and therefore the legislation must be amended in order to reflect the changes that the province has signed on to.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, the last area is efforts made within these amendments to provide a higher level of consistency with respect to different Acts that affect municipalities, whether that be in the North or the South or in rural or urban settings.

So the first area, Mr. Speaker, that was identified, the issue of annexations, we know this is an issue that affects many people and affects a number of communities. And as populations shift within the province, Mr. Speaker, people moving from one area to another and from people wanting to come to Saskatchewan, which of course is a positive thing, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of jurisdictions that are experiencing growth. And I can think of, well Saskatoon is one example, and my home constituency is another one, where there are new subdivisions on the edge of town.

Now we most certainly need to ensure that when we're doing our urban planning and the strategies that we have as regions, we need to ensure that we're growing in a sensible manner that allows for sustainable communities in an economic and in an environmental sense. But we know this is occurring, and most members would have communities where they see growth, and there is the reality that certain communities are expanding. And therefore that affects relationships with neighbouring jurisdictions, and that raises the issue of occasions when one centre needs to annex another area in order to accommodate boundaries that are expanding.

So what this piece of legislation is doing, Mr. Speaker, is providing some more clarity and a new time limit on how long one municipality must wait for a response to a proposed annexation application from the other affected municipality before the process is considered disputed and can proceed to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. So the idea is, while there may be an annexation application or notice that is given, if one of the parties, the party that has a territory being annexed is not supportive of the change, I imagine — it'd be interesting to know from the minister if this is coming out of a specific situation within the province and a certain jurisdiction — but I could imagine a situation where, if one party was not happy with what was occurring, that an unwillingness to respond in a timely manner could be one way that the process could be

drawn out a bit in order to prevent the annexation to occur. So what this is doing is allowing a different time limit before it goes to another body which would provide a ruling on the proposed annexation.

It also, Mr. Speaker, in this change, is providing clear authority for the approval of a portion or parts of an application by the board, for example, the portions on which agreement has been reached among the councils; making the ban on similar applications going to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board consistent among the three municipal Acts at one year. So a consistency between different pieces of legislation which, as I said earlier, in most circumstances would make sense. I think it is, Mr. Speaker, if we have a new time limit.

The minister remarked in the different sections that there had been consultation with SUMA and SARM. And I recognize that this particular issue of annexation could affect both parties, both organizations — members of SUMA and SARM. So this change is not identified as one coming out of the discussions from SUMA and SARM, but I'm sure RMs and urban municipalities have had a discussion about this and providing information. So it would be useful — and perhaps this is something that can be cleared up in committee as well — to hear views from the two organizations and any other interested parties as to whether or not the new proposed time limit is appropriate, whether it clears things up, and whether it will serve the needs of both sides in a fair manner as they would perceive it, Mr. Speaker.

So I guess the changes that I've talked about and some of the adjustments that are occurring here, it really does speak to, Mr. Speaker, the fact that when we look at how our municipalities operate and how they relate to one another, we need to ensure that we have the best system possible that allows for positive outcomes for citizens because, at the end of the day — whether we're at the federal, provincial, or municipal or school board level — the work that we do is about the constituent. So we need to ensure that the changes that are being proposed do in fact give us the best possible system for interested parties, a system that maintains separate interests — recognizing that there are separate concerns — but a system that ensures that both sides can operate in a manner that is effective and that is fair.

So the first area that I just talked about, Mr. Speaker, had to do with annexations and the relationship between municipalities and how that can be settled through an RM board. So, Mr. Speaker, there's a number of concerns here. That was the first area.

The second area which I will now speak about, Mr. Speaker, has to do with requests, as I identified, coming from SARM and SUMA. And it has to . . . Again, it touches on this issue of how municipalities can meet the needs of their constituents, with the reality that there are changes occurring within municipalities that affect the ability of municipalities to deliver services or the types of services that are required do in fact change as different individuals move into areas. And the one example that's given here, Mr. Speaker, the quote from the minister's speech says:

Many rural municipalities are seeing the development of areas that require more urban-type services which are

different from the typical agricultural areas. Residential developments are more common now throughout RMs, as people wish to relocate to an acreage or a pocket of developed lots. Presently the ratepayers throughout the RM may be paying for services in these residential developments that most of the RM ratepayers do not access or require.

This is the issue, Mr. Speaker, where . . . For most members and people in Saskatchewan as they travel the province will see these developments pop up within RMs which provide acreage lots, development opportunities for RMs, which does increase the tax base, but also provide different challenges for these RMs. And it's the notion of who's paying for what, who needs what, and how that occurs in the most effective manner. I know most members, I mean the most common . . . I drive a lot of Saskatchewan roads but the most common route that I drive is between my home and Regina on Highway 11. And we can see a number of instances, especially between Saskatoon going up to Blackstrap, where there have been these types of developments which puts pressures on the local areas.

And I remember, it was a few years ago, having a meeting with the RM of Corman Park talking about how this has affected the RM. And I won't get into a discussion on Corman Park in this speech, Mr. Speaker, as that's perhaps a longer speech. But we know that it provides, as we have these types of communities popping up, we know that it provides challenges for both sides. So it's important to have the right type of legislation in place so that communities can grow in a way that is responsible and that meets the interests of all people. That's important.

So that was a request, Mr. Speaker, this aspect of clearing up legislation in that area and providing more detail, came from SARM. SUMA also had a requirement, Mr. Speaker, which as the minister suggested and which was proposed in the amendment, had to do with greater flexibility to address issues related to municipal debt limits. Specifically, Mr. Speaker, “. . . amendments are proposed to ensure authority to define own-source revenues and regulation for municipal debt limit purposes and establish alternate procedures for determining a municipality's debt limit.”

[16:15]

So the notion that we know that municipalities are required to provide a great deal of services to people — and there are varying degrees of ability that municipalities have to provide those services, and there are many municipalities that borrow resources or finances in order to provide services — and this deals with how a municipality would establish a debt limit and more autonomy as I understand it, at the local level, to control that as opposed to being controlled to a higher degree by the province.

It's important, Mr. Speaker, to be responsive to the local level and ensure that municipalities have the ability to make rules as they see fit. And it's also important, Mr. Speaker, from a provincial perspective, to ensure that the proper framework is in place, that the debt limits with the municipalities are being set in an appropriate level that is safe and responsible, yet still allowing the flexibility that the municipality may need to provide services.

Debt limits are important aspects. We can think to a similar situation, though not within the realm of municipalities, another situation that affects an autonomous group and that would be the University of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, where they have established a debt limit as determined by our best practices in universities of its class across the country based on its assets, its liabilities. And in so doing, finding that level of debt that the university can safely assume.

And we know, Mr. Speaker, by recent comments from the university administration — I shouldn't say comments — recent words printed in public documents from the University of Saskatchewan that the borrowing capacity of the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] is maxed out. And that ties to a larger discussion, Mr. Speaker, about funding that was promised and no longer provided to the university.

I raise that issue, Mr. Speaker, because we do need to be cognizant of the fact that funding municipalities is important, and it's also important to ensure that appropriate funds are in place for municipalities to do their work — not that there shouldn't be debt involved in certain projects, but that it's at a level that is safe and responsible and well thought through.

So I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that these changes that are proposed here would accomplish that end in order to provide the necessary autonomy to municipalities, yet still maintaining the proper framework and the proper controls in place in order to ensure that wise and responsible decisions are made for the interests of constituents, of taxpayers, of ratepayers, of people living in our cities, towns, and rural communities.

Another component, Mr. Speaker, that this piece of legislation speaks to, and I already addressed this to some degree, had to do with implications stemming from provincial adoption of the New West Partnership and agreement on internal trade. As the minister stated in his remarks, "... the next category of amendments includes enabling municipalities to establish and enter into the voluntary intermunicipal business licensing arrangements and the common issuance of weight vehicle permits with other municipalities."

So the key word here, Mr. Speaker, as I see it in the minister's description, is the voluntary intermunicipal business licensing arrangements, so again, recognizing the need to coordinate when possible but also not to erode local autonomy to a degree that local self interests are eroded. I think that is an important point. And so it is my desire and I look forward to more discussions perhaps in committee about how that balance is in fact being achieved, some more detail on that, the nature of the voluntary intermunicipal business licensing arrangements.

There's also on this aspect, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the New West Partnership, the issue of overweight permits. And that's not new health jargon, Mr. Speaker. That has to do with issues affecting municipalities and it is, Mr. Speaker, as the minister said, "Amendments related to overweight permits clarify the ability for municipalities to voluntarily develop a system that allows for the common issuance of overweight permits." And this of course, Mr. Speaker, has to do with components of transportation and with respect to the effectiveness and the rules that are in place in order to ensure the responsible use of our roadways, as I understand it, Mr.

Speaker.

The last component has to do with the administrative matters that were discussed and earlier mentioned in my remarks, the fact that there needs to be consistency among the pieces of legislation that affect different municipalities. The minister stated in his speech that:

These were initially requested by the cities as proposed amendments to *The Cities Act*. To ensure consistency among the municipal Acts, these amendments are also included in this bill and also *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*.

So it's the notion, as I said before, that across the pieces of legislation that affect municipalities, there ought to be a degree of consistency. That's important because then it allows municipalities to compare their situation to another and ensure that they're comparing apples to apples. And then I think it allows the public, if they have a question about a policy, it allows them to have a greater degree of clarity about what the different Acts are talking about and how this might have an implication at the local level.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we have the proper approach to language, the proper approach to administrative components. And so if this legislation is in fact simply accomplishing that and not doing something more extensive, I think that that is, as based on my understanding from what the minister has said and my basic understanding of the bill, Mr. Speaker, I think that is something that would make sense.

So as you can see, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about municipalities we know that it touches on a lot of areas. It touches on a lot of areas, Mr. Speaker, because it affects people's lives in a significant way. And as government has grown and changed over the decades sometimes the complexity of the issues that we face also grow and change and evolve. And that certainly applies to the many things that we encounter here at the provincial level if we look at the growth of budgets over the last ... from the initial budget of the province to the budget now. We know that government does many important things and affects people's lives in many important ways. Therefore when we're looking at legislation, it's necessary to ensure that the legislation that we're putting forward speaks to the complexity and the modern realities that municipalities face.

And in this situation, Mr. Speaker, there's been a number of components. We've talked about ... The first component that we spoke about at length, that I spoke about at length based on changes brought forward by the minister has to do with how municipalities interact with one another when there is a desire and an intent for annexation to take over an area from one municipality to another. And so it is, Mr. Speaker, important and necessary to clarify that process in order to ensure that there is fairness, but at the same time in order to ensure that there is expediency in a timely manner, that things aren't drawn out longer than they need to be. But at the same time we have to ensure that things don't happen so quickly that due process is not followed and that in situations, which is often the case where there are legitimate concerns and question marks, we need to ensure that those issues are addressed in a satisfactory

manner. So it's important to strike the right balance.

We also, Mr. Speaker, through SARM and SUMA where we've seen changes and . . . I shouldn't say changes. When we've seen recommendations coming from these two organizations. They are the umbrella organizations for rural municipalities and urban municipalities, and it's important to have a respectful and positive relationship with those groups so that the information we receive at a provincial level is in fact consistent with what Saskatchewan people want. And so that is an important relationship, and when information is received from those organizations it's necessary that there be . . . It's necessary that it is heeded.

That being said, it's not outside the realm of possibility that conflicting information may come from the organizations, and of course on any issue there are two sides of the coin. So it's necessary to ensure that we don't blindly accept requests coming from either organization but that we approach those requests in a thoughtful and a deliberative manner.

We also know, Mr. Speaker, as provincially we've entered into different arrangements to do with the New West Partnership and the Agreement on Internal Trade, which is a broader discussion and perhaps a topic for another speech. But as I said earlier on, it's important to take a balanced approach as well to this issue recognizing that efficiency and streamlining is good, but also recognizing that there are unique local needs in many circumstances. And each order of government is important, and so when concerns or views are expressed from one order of government, it's necessary to ensure that we're responding and recognizing the points that they raise.

The last component that I'll speak about, Mr. Speaker, in wrapping up now, is the issue of administrative matters and consistency in language across Acts. This is important. This is a good step because it provides the public with a better understanding of the pieces of legislation if the same terminology is used. If there's consistency in that aspect, then it provides greater clarity for members of the public and members of the Assembly as well. And I think that is a positive and a constructive thing.

So, Mr. Speaker, municipalities are very important. The Act itself is lengthy. The amendments are also substantive, so I have appreciated the opportunity to talk about the different components at some length. And we look forward to more discussions that my colleagues will have through adjourned debates, as well as the opportunity that we will have at the committee process to unpack the items further.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would thank members for their attention. And on that issue at this time I would move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 73, *An Act to amend The Municipalities Act*. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member from Saskatoon Massey Place has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 73. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

## Bill No. 74

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Reiter that **Bill No. 74 — *The Cities Amendment Act, 2012*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter debate and discussion this afternoon as it relates to municipalities in our province, specifically this afternoon, the cities of our province by way of Bill No. 74, *The Cities Amendment Act, 2012*. And I will get into focusing a little bit on some of the minister's comments, some of the justification for this bill, some of the alleged consultation that's been put forward, and some broader areas of questions and concern for municipalities right across Saskatchewan.

Municipalities right now in fact are dealing with some very critical issues across our province, whether it's waste water or whether it's transportation issues, whether it's the hard infrastructure and servicing of lots and utilities. Mr. Speaker, our municipalities are certainly stepping up to the challenges and opportunities that they're facing. But we need to be doing all we can as a province to support our municipalities in making sure that we're growing cities, growing communities across this province that are in fact enhancing quality of life for Saskatchewan people.

I notice our infrastructure in this province, particularly for cities, is under great strain but as well for our small towns and smaller communities across this province. And when we're talking about the access to quality drinking water but also waste water and how we're dealing with our sewer systems in this province, this is a big issue. And I know this Act here specifically focuses in on the 16 cities in this province by way of *The Cities Act* but, Mr. Speaker, and you would know whether you're in Cupar or whether in Carlyle, whether in North Battleford, whether you're in Strasbourg, whether you're in any part of this province, the infrastructure requirements for our small towns, our cities, are significant and we need a willing partner in government to be working with our municipal partners to be addressing those issues.

And I know today I was using the story of taking from Peter to pay Paul, Mr. Speaker, and I feel that this is in many ways displayed by our relationship currently with municipalities in this province. We have a government that, you know, proclaims that their finances and their fiscal circumstance is A-okay but at the same time we see a real off-loading or transfer of tough circumstances for many of our other partners and that includes our municipalities along with other organizations such as our universities and our school boards. But focusing specifically on municipalities, we need to recognize, I believe, the health and welfare of our provincial finances in a broader context, and that should too include our municipalities.

And I believe if you go and look at the bottom line of municipalities across this province and look at their balance sheets and look at their budgets, what we see is municipalities across this province that are under great strain. And not only do they have higher borrowing requirements than we've ever seen

before. They also have large liabilities and deficits that they need to address from a very limited revenue structure, Mr. Speaker, and certainly doesn't have access to the wealth of resources and revenues that the provincial government has. And so certainly any strategy of development in this province must include a strong relationship and important structures and mechanisms to support that relationship with our municipalities.

[16:30]

And I know anyone who's observed their property tax notice over the past few years and their property tax bill in this province — both businesses and families, homeowners, Mr. Speaker — will recognize that municipalities in many ways are having to step up to the plate in absence of willing partners at the provincial level and at the federal level, and are doing so with the dollar of the property tax payer, the owner of properties, homeowners and businesses. And this is something that we need to address. And certainly we are advocates, and I'm an advocate for a structure to be put in place that allows the infrastructure dollars to be able to flow in a structured way, in a meaningful way, to address these challenges and pressures that our municipal partners are experiencing.

I don't see anything in this bill by way of changes that provides meaningful response to those big pressures and big challenges that our communities, our cities, our towns are facing right now, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I don't see any mention by the minister, recognition that these pressures exist. And I know they're large, whether you're in Moose Jaw, whether here in my community of Regina, or up in Saskatoon or, as I say, even so many of our smaller towns and communities that are facing significant deficits, significant pressures.

And a lot of this relates around access to drinking water, quality water, but also our waste water. And if you go across this province, you've got lagoons that are at capacity for many communities all across this province and big questions about what solution they're going to be able to bring forward for their community and at what cost. And certainly any development strategy of government needs to support and understand these pressures and understand who's paying for it right now, Mr. Speaker, which is a significant burden being placed upon property taxes in this province.

I know here in Regina right now, Mr. Speaker, there's big questions around how are we going to be able to address our waste water treatment facility, something that's very important to our community and something that's a responsibility for us to take care of. And without taking care of that waste water in a responsible fashion, we're leaving contamination for a watershed that flows away from Regina and right through the Qu'Appelle chain all the way up through your country, Mr. Speaker — in fact through your constituency as well — and something that we all need to be very mindful of.

And these are the kinds of discussions and consultations and then subsequent solutions that we need to be able to bring forward to municipalities across the province. Simply right now punting that responsibility on to our cities and our small towns is an approach that is unfair not only to the municipalities but it's unfair to homeowners and businesses across the province who are seeing the impact in a significant way by way of their

property taxes, Mr. Speaker. And I find it disappointing when I'm looking at *The Cities Act* — and the minister references that he's had some conversations with some of the partners on this front — that he's failed to address the elephant in the room, is that, in our growing Saskatchewan, we need to now be stepping up to the plate with meaningful structures to ensure the development of our communities, ensures and maintains and improves quality of life, and that we're not off-loading on to our municipalities, which I believe is something that we have witnessed for some period of time. And we see it at the federal level, and we also see it here at the provincial level.

I'll focus some of my attention directly to some of the recommendations or some of the changes that the minister is suggesting to be made in this legislation. But what I will say is that it is so crucial, so important that when we look at a bill like this that it's reflective of thoughtful consultation with our partners, with our cities, with our stakeholders, with SUMA, with our city managers, with our clerks, and making sure all across this province, whether it's the voice of that council in Swift Current or the city manager in Swift Current or the clerk in Swift Current or whether it's the voice of that member in Lloydminster, the council in Lloydminster or there in Prince Albert where they're dealing and grappling with big issues by way of infrastructure and a government that's really dug their heels in in providing the proper support that that community requires by way of water — which is a major issue for Prince Albert — but also by way of bridge infrastructure that really this government has taken a piecemeal and dismissive approach to providing the meaningful solutions that that community requires. But when we have legislation like this before us as it relates to our cities and our municipalities, we really do need to make sure that we're reflective of those stakeholders' interests and hearing of their voices.

And I'm not certain or convinced that that has occurred to put together, to drive this piece of legislation. We know that that's how you get good legislation though, Mr. Speaker, is listening to many voices, listening to those who are impacted, listening to those who are on the streets, in our communities dealing and grappling with these issues right now, and reflecting that then in the legislation that's been put forward. And I'm not certain that I see that in this legislation.

There's passing reference to consultation that occurred with some. I hope that's been broad-based consultation. I hope that that consultation is reflected in the legislation that's been put forward. Sadly we've learned from this government that we can't simply take their word for it, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to suggesting that they've consulted. We need to make sure that we go out and engage in that consultation with stakeholders across this province. And, Mr. Speaker, you can count on this opposition doing just that, engaging with our partners all across this province, our municipalities — in this case our urban municipalities, in this case those 16 cities — and making sure that the legislative changes that are being made here by way of this legislation in fact are consistent with the consultation that occurred and that in fact they're not bringing about a host of unintended consequences that are not desirable for communities, Mr. Speaker.

And that's our role. That's our role, to be there to scrutinize. It's our role to consult. It's our role to provide that we're making

sure that that oversight is in place and to make sure that we're standing up for the best interests of Saskatchewan people and communities. And you can count on us to do that.

But I will say, Mr. Speaker, that we would appreciate a more willing partner on the government side of the table to go forward in deriving legislation and creating legislation and creating programs to embrace that same sort of approach — to be listening with partners, whether it's in the education sector, Mr. Speaker, or as it relates here in our municipal sector with a host of challenges and pressures that we're facing.

So I'll get specifically to the amendments that the minister's speaking to. What he says is that this legislation does four things. Now the one thing that it doesn't do, Mr. Speaker, is it certainly doesn't step up to the plate to put forward mechanisms or solutions to address the infrastructure pressures facing our communities, and I need to make sure I make ample mention of this because this is the big issue facing my city. It's the big issue facing cities across this province. And I won't say it's just an issue facing cities, although this is *The Cities Act* so that's why I would focus that way.

It's an issue facing the towns and small communities in your constituency, Mr. Speaker, whether it's Strasbourg or Bulyea or Cupar or Lemberg or we can go down the line, Mr. Speaker. They are issues we need to step up to the plate with solutions, and we have a government that certainly hasn't been a willing partner to date to put forward meaningful solutions, to address the infrastructure pressures that many are facing.

And I know that these aren't always the front page items, Mr. Speaker, on the front page of our paper, but they matter to all of us — our water distribution system, our public transport systems, our public transit systems, our waste water solutions, Mr. Speaker, or how we're developing and servicing our lots or how we're ensuring that there's a balance of affordable housing within the mixture of new communities, Mr. Speaker. And these are big, big issues.

Or how are we going at, in fact, building our developing province? And what I see in many ways is that municipalities are having a burden and responsibility punted on to them and they're going out and having to secure financing and borrowing that's coming at a higher cost in a lot of cases than the cost of borrowing for government.

And I think that it's an important time to review tools such as the municipal financing board and making sure that it's as helpful as it could and should be right now in addressing some of these challenges. Or are we constraining and limiting many of our municipalities from addressing some of these pressures? And certainly borrowing is just one part of it. We need to make sure that we're not simply encumbering communities, whether it's North Battleford or whether it's Lloydminster or whether it's Estevan or whether it's Swift Current or Regina or Saskatoon, with more debt, Mr. Speaker. What we need to understand is that the province itself has at its disposal and has access to a wealth of resources and revenues that cities certainly don't have.

And so there's a role and a responsibility for a government to make sure that it's working with those partners and making

those dollars flow to make the improvements required. Otherwise it's this scenario, as I highlighted here today and I've been talking about, of robbing Peter to pay Paul — propping up sort of what, you know, is held as sort of a good news story for the province to suggest, but at the same time an indebtedness that is growing at an alarming rate with significant costs for municipalities and property tax payers across this province.

Getting to the specific agenda of this bill and what the minister's suggesting, the first recommendation is that they will improve processes related to boundary alterations or annexations to make it better for cities and municipalities involved. Pretty simple statement that's put forward, one that maybe nods the head of many, but what we need to make sure is that this is in fact reflective of the best interests of our rural municipalities, of our urban municipalities, and that they do serve us well from a regional planning perspective.

We want to make sure this isn't just some sort of knee-jerk response from government. We want to make sure that it provides the types of relationships that are appropriate for our municipalities and our RMs to enter into as they're facing annexation, and making sure there's appropriate respect to the valuation of land and to making sure that dollars flow to those municipalities that rightfully should receive them, and that it allows us to develop and organize ourselves in a way that's in the best interests of all communities, Mr. Speaker. And making sure this isn't just a heavy hand, as I say, of government deciding that the power should sit either with them themselves as the provincial government or with the cities themselves or with the RMs themselves.

It very much requires a balanced approach and I hope this isn't a knee-jerk response to some of the pressures that we're facing in the province. And I would never dismiss the challenge or pressures that communities face when they're dealing with annexation. And I know each community goes at this in different ways. Small communities or our thriving cities such as Estevan or Yorkton or Regina, they each go at it differently.

You know, what I do know is that it's interesting coming from this government, a government that has gone out — and in fact I'm thinking of one of the entities that they were involved with, the Global Transportation Hub — where they went out and in fact expropriated an awful lot of land, I understand, Mr. Speaker, and have built out some relationships, both with landowners but also with municipal partners in the RM and the city that are a strained environment, Mr. Speaker, and have, well, created potential liabilities and possibly lawsuits for the province of Saskatchewan. So I find that this is interesting coming from this government who, when have been given the opportunity, have chosen that approach, Mr. Speaker, and have not been able to broker an approach that has been able to balance off the pressures and interests that exist.

So I hope what's being proposed is reflective of a balanced approach, one that respects the jurisdictions, that respects our responsibilities and needs of our rural municipalities, but also respects those of the cities and our municipalities. And that's something that we're going to be seeking further clarity from, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the minister's statement, just in a simple way in his introduction of this bill, doesn't support any of the facts as to what the consultation was on this front, what the

various perspectives were or what the impacts are for communities. So that's something we'll be seeking, certainly directly through the minister on the floor of this Assembly, or directly through committee structures. And certainly we'll be doing so by working with all of our municipal partners, our rural municipalities as well as our cities, to establish a full understanding of these consequences for Saskatchewan people.

Moving along, the second item that has been put forward is that this has been put forward to respond to requests for amendments from city governments for consistent authorities and treatment among three municipal Acts regarding matters such as unpaid utility charges and trailer home permitting. Well, Mr. Speaker, that sounds pretty straightforward. We need to understand, I guess, what the impact of that consistent treatment is, the consolidation of those Acts, and what the real impact is back into communities and on people. And that'll be something we'll derive through thoughtful consultation.

I would have hoped in fact though, Mr. Speaker, that for the public of Saskatchewan that the minister would have been able to offer up some more information that reflects what this means for all stakeholders: for that homeowner, for that business, for that municipality. And we don't have that right here, Mr. Speaker, so we're left to take a sort of a general statement from the minister here that this is something that's in our best interests. We'll continue to do the consultation on this.

[16:45]

And I'll move on here to a couple of other items . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I always like when the other side gets a bit of energy in them, Mr. Speaker. It's something that I wish they'd apply that same sort of energy to the thoughtful consultation with the communities within their own constituencies to make sure they understand what these impacts mean for, whether it's Saskatoon or Regina, North Battleford. But also making sure we're stepping up to the plate for the municipal pressures that are facing our smaller communities, whether it's Fort Qu'Appelle or Indian Head or Milestone, important communities with important pressures as well, Mr. Speaker.

The third part of this relates directly to the New West Partnership agreement on internal trade in areas such as business licensing and municipal procurement. Now this is an area that I'm interested in getting the perspective of councillors in Swift Current, and in Yorkton, in Regina, and Saskatoon because this in fact does tie municipalities and how they operate to a decision made by this government, made unilaterally by this government, made without consultation with Saskatchewan people by this government.

And when we're talking about procurement and tying the hands of municipalities and focusing procurement in a specific manner, this is something that I think we do need to understand what the implications are for a municipality. And I believe there's a diverse set of voices and opinions on what this provision means for communities.

And I know as well there's a lot of debate, and I've heard from many that in fact this agreement has caused a broad-based tendering for projects. And now we have, of course, tendering, there's a threshold amount for which tendering for procurement

is required. I know there's many that I've spoken to in the private sector in those organizations and companies that deliver services that say that this sort of a broad-based measure may have the unintended consequence, Mr. Speaker — but a direct consequence — of driving up costs, because it's a broad-based tender that goes across the board.

And something that as well we should have the reasonable discussion about whether or not in fact if there is a benefit. When you're using public money, is there a benefit to be using a Saskatchewan company, Mr. Speaker? Or is it fair game that it should simply be to the bidder out in British Columbia and the company and the employees from Alberta to come in and do that work? I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker, but I certainly lean towards understanding the importance of a local economy, of local development, and of being able to support and build out strong local economies whether it's in Moose Jaw, whether it's in Prince Albert, whether it's in Regina, whether it's in La Ronge, Mr. Speaker. And I'm cautious of accepting this government's word that municipalities should now be forced by way of their heavy hand to accept an agreement for which they were no part of being a signer to, Mr. Speaker.

And so this is something that I will be moving forward in a consultative fashion with those who were impacted — our communities: Saskatoon, Regina, Swift Current — and understanding their full perspective on what the impact of the northwest partnership, what that impact is on their procurement processes and as well as matters such as cost and impacts on local community.

But I know it's been shared with me by many that the unintended consequence of the provision that's been put forward by this government, by way of the northwest partnership, may be an unintended consequence of in fact increased costs on small projects that are now going to be paid by Saskatchewan people with public money, but also, Mr. Speaker, that the consideration that many of those dollars, public dollars, may flow directly to out-of-province businesses and corporations that will flow those dollars back to their respective jurisdictions. And I think there's a reasonable discussion to be had about local benefit, local economies, and making sure that we are in fact building communities, and while doing so building out a strong local supply chain, a strong local economy that has organizations and professional services that are able to be crucial drivers of the development of this province.

And like I've said before, I think it's wrong for a community such as Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, to have this decision simply made for them by another level of government. I believe that they should have been consulted from day one on provisions and agreements that were made that impact their community, that impact their treasury, and that impact the services and supplies that they procure, Mr. Speaker. But of course, that wasn't the case.

And I think we need to recognize again that we have a circumstance where, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure you can relate to this, the circumstance that you're taking from Peter to pay Paul. Paul of course being the provincial government, Mr. Speaker, who's in this position of offloading an awful lot of responsibility or abdicating important responsibilities. We could



also talk about the federal government on this front. Meanwhile we see our municipalities being more indebted than ever before, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, we can stick our head in the sand, Mr. Speaker, and pretend that it's just not so and look to boastful billboards of the government opposite that are paid for with public money and pretend that everything's A-okay, Mr. Speaker. But I think if we did a broader analysis and audit of what's actually going on in Saskatchewan right now, whether it's in Estevan or whether it's in North Battleford or whether it's in Saskatoon or Moose Jaw, I would suspect we'd see an interesting story being played out on the balance sheets of municipalities across this province.

And I would suspect, Mr. Speaker, that it's one of increased debt, Mr. Speaker, with a government that boasts, as I say, about this growth for the sake of growth alone agenda, Mr. Speaker, and then is an unwilling partner to step up to the plate, Mr. Speaker, and to build out the relationship required, the mechanism required to support the development back into our communities so our government can pretend what they like about our provincial finances.

But if it's bearing itself out in the community of Weyburn or in Moose Jaw or Regina by way of massive debt increases for these communities and pressures that are placed directly back onto the businesses and homeowners, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And you know I hear members opposite say, massive growth, is what I hear them say, Mr. Speaker. That's right, Mr. Speaker. We do have significant growth that's going on. This is where you then need a thoughtful partner in government to take a balanced approach and to look beyond the lens of their own provincial finances and realize what the ripple effect is out onto everyone else, Mr. Speaker.

So where we have a government, Mr. Speaker, that boasts and preaches about growth and boosts their own financial position with public dollars, they're incredibly dismissive of, I believe, what's going on at the university level, at the household level where families are under more strain than ever before, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, and at the municipal level where in fact we need to take the growth strategy or the growth agenda of that government and make sure that we're then putting in place the supports and the structures and the relationships to make sure that we're able to better the lives, to strengthen communities and build healthier, stronger communities for tomorrow.

And I know that's a goal of individuals, whether they live in Estevan. I know it's a goal of individuals that live in Weyburn, and I know it's a goal of those living in Regina. And I know that it's unfair and unrealistic, Mr. Speaker, to simply let the debts of those communities skyrocket, Mr. Speaker. And it's rather appalling if you take a look at the trajectory and the trends and the records of what municipalities are being forced to take on by way of debt, Mr. Speaker, and then what the subsequent impact is going to be for the businesses in Estevan or the businesses in Regina or the businesses in Weyburn.

And of course then, Mr. Speaker, we can look at that hard reality going on for so many households, those that can afford it

least, Mr. Speaker, those that can afford it least that are going to be asked by municipalities all across this province to have to pay significantly more, not because of direct actions necessarily of a municipality but because of a government who is unwilling to take a balanced approach to development and to understand the important role that our municipalities play in providing the services and quality of life that we all desire, Mr. Speaker.

So they can boast and pretend whatever financial story they want to as a province, but I think if we look at what the ripple out is to the rest of the province by way of municipalities, by way of households, by way of school boards, by way of our universities, Mr. Speaker, I believe that would be taking a more fulsome look of the true state of the health and welfare of this province, Mr. Speaker.

So I've spoken to three of those specific items that the member has put forward. I'll look at the fourth one here. The minister suggests that they need to address requests from ". . . the municipal sector to clarify wording and improve consistency among the municipal Acts regarding primarily administrative matters and make other changes identified by the ministry to clarify areas such as education property tax reporting, licence fees, and purchasing policies.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a pretty concise statement placed by the minister. Sounds reasonable. Sounds like something that maybe we might support. Maybe sounds like something from sort of a housekeeping in nature, but we need to figure that out, Mr. Speaker, because we've learned very quickly that we just can't take the word of that government opposite, Mr. Speaker, when they've made the statement that they've gone out and consulted with Saskatchewan people.

And we need to make sure we understand the full impact on the ground with those that understand it, that are facing the consequences in our cities all across this province. And we'll need to seek out and make sure that we understand what this means for Prince Albert. We need to make sure we understand what it means from a perspective of the council, from the administration, from the clerks. We need to do just the same down in Swift Current, Mr. Speaker. We need to do the same down in Estevan and here in Regina.

And, Mr. Speaker, if government, if members opposite think that each community is facing the exact same pressures and challenges and that they're a homogeneous unit that need to be treated all the same, Mr. Speaker, I think they may be surprised to recognize that each community has its unique pressures.

And I know my good friend, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy, is mentioning we also should talk about the pressures that Weyburn's facing, and certainly we should. A special time in many ways down in southeast Saskatchewan with an expanding Bakken field, Mr. Speaker, and a strong business environment on many fronts, Mr. Speaker. But then by way of that growth, by way of that development, we need to make sure that we're supporting those communities. And specifically I think of Weyburn as a prime example as a community or Estevan, Mr. Speaker, of one that we need to make sure that we're listening to and responding to their pressures. Because right now, Mr. Speaker, those communities in many ways have been forced to go at it alone, Mr. Speaker. And when they are

forced to go at it alone, they're being forced to utilize the dollar of the homeowner and the business, Mr. Speaker, by way of property taxes to address what are big challenges and big opportunities.

So what we need to do is take the lofty rhetoric about how . . . of the message opposite and make sure we're transferring that into a solid relationship with our municipal partners, those in Estevan, those in Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, and making sure we're stepping up with the sort of infrastructure required. And I know that busy artery, when you get down on 39 and 6, Mr. Speaker, those two highways, and the strain that's placed on that infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. And the members opposite like to boast about what's going on in the Bakken field and boy, Mr. Speaker, it's something. It's something special on a lot of fronts. But then we see a government that's unwilling to step up to the plate and support the activity in those areas, an area when we're speaking about the Southeast specifically that in fact is contributing hugely to the treasury of this province, paying for infrastructure all across this province . . .

[Interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** — There seems to be a lot of energy in the Assembly late this afternoon. We only have a few more minutes left. I would recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, I guess when we — and I do get these are important issues — and when I look in the eyes of many across this province, when I observe in the lives of communities across this province, I recognize that we and I could be doing something better. I realize that there's a better way forward by way of partnerships, relationships, working together to make sure that we take what we are or certainly should be proud of — economic development and growth. And we'll focus again on the southeast corner, Mr. Speaker, and make sure that we're building healthier, stronger, communities for generations forward, Mr. Speaker, and that we take the growth of today in making sure that we understand how we want to become, who we want to become in 5 and 10 and 20 years from now, Mr. Speaker.

And right now I believe the approach of government is to sit on their hands and to let municipalities borrow more, Mr. Speaker. And I see the debt charts on those municipalities across this province. I know who's going to be asked to pay for that, Mr. Speaker. It's your constituents and mine. It's going to be the homeowners across this province, the families who can least afford it, the businesses of this province, Mr. Speaker.

And in many ways it reflects this whole scenario of taking from Peter to pay Paul, Mr. Speaker, allowing a government to say, everything's A-okay with them, Mr. Speaker, but pushing on that ripple effect that's impacting the lives in communities all across this province. And we can do something better than that. We should be working with this special opportunity we have within our economy, the current resource prosperity, and we should be making sure that we're fully capturing that opportunity. Improving the lives of communities all across this province is something that we'll continue to stand and to speak towards.

As it relates to *The Cities Act* that's been put forward here, Mr. Speaker, I guess I'd say there was an opportunity to do more. We'll go out and make sure we fully understand what this means on the ground in the lives of communities across Saskatchewan so that we can bring forward the type of thoughtful analysis and potential amendments to strengthen legislation in this Assembly. And we'll be working with all Saskatchewan people do just that, Mr. Speaker. And that'll be our course of action in the days, weeks, and months forward, to make sure we're providing those voices that need to be heard, voices that are too quiet from Prince Albert, too quiet from Swift Current, too quiet from Estevan, Mr. Speaker, too quiet from many parts of this province, too quiet in North Battleford, and bringing that voice forward.

But at this point in time, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank those that work to improve our municipalities, those on the ground in our communities. And I will adjourn debate of Bill No. 74, *The Cities Amendment Act, 2012*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member from Regina Rosemont has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 74, *The Cities Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried. It being now very close to 5 o'clock, this House will now stand adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]



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