



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

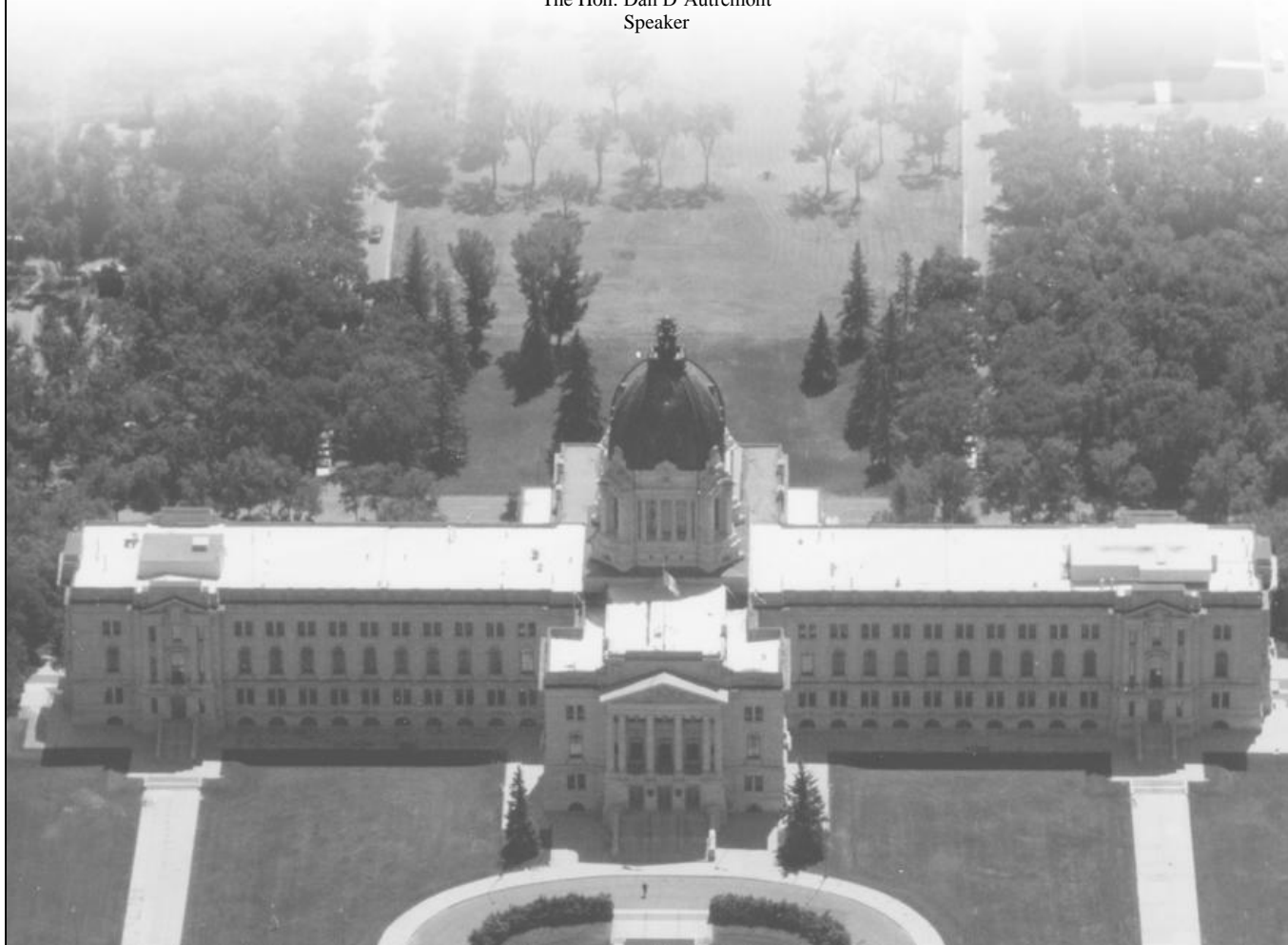
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(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 resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

The Speaker: — It now being 7 o'clock, the session is resumed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure this evening to join in on the discussion that has occurred already on Bill No. 74, *An Act to amend The Cities Act*.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation contains a number of different components as identified by the minister in his second reading speech on November 27th of this year, of course identifying the different areas where this piece of legislation, this amendment, the areas that would be affected. The actual Act itself, Mr. Speaker, *The Cities Act*, is quite substantial, as members can see by the Act that I'm holding. It's a number of pages and fairly lengthy, as one would expect, Mr. Speaker, when dealing with an issue as important as our cities here in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we know that individuals here in the province live in a variety of settings. Sometimes it's a very urban centre in our two largest cities of Saskatoon and Regina. Sometimes it's a smaller urban setting in a medium-sized city. Sometimes it's in a town or a hamlet, Mr. Speaker, and sometimes it's on an acreage or on a farm. So we know there are a number of different settings where individuals in the province choose to live. And of course that's a good thing, as individuals have the choice to choose where in fact they would like to live according to their occupations, particular areas where they may have an attachment to the region, Mr. Speaker.

And so in looking at this piece of legislation, *The Cities Act*, it's important to ensure that any sort of changes that may come forward through the amendment to *The Cities Act*, it's important to ensure that they are the right changes that are needed for this particular piece of legislation because we know that a good number of people, many people here in Saskatchewan, live in cities. That's a reality. And not just individuals who live in the city, but the amendments put forward in this Act also relate to RMs [rural municipality] that may be adjacent to a city. And it talks about the relationship between the two orders of government or two jurisdictional bodies, I should say.

In looking at this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, the content is divided up into four main areas as identified in the minister's second reading speech and then also as seen in the actual amendment to the Act. The first component, Mr. Speaker, deals with, as the minister says, has to do with boundary alterations or annexations with respect to a city adjacent to another municipality.

So we know, Mr. Speaker, in a number of jurisdictions in the province where the cities are growing due to a number of factors, we see situations where the city boundaries need to expand in order to accommodate the growth of the city. And in these situations, this of course affects the neighbouring municipalities. I think, Mr. Speaker, of Saskatoon for example being adjacent to the RM of Corman Park. There are situations where as the city limits of Saskatoon, my home constituency, expand, this of course has implications to the surrounding rural municipalities. So it's important, Mr. Speaker, as we consider any of these types of changes, it's important to ensure that there is the proper relationship between a city and rural municipality.

So what this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, seeks to do is to provide some greater clarity and understanding with respect to the relationship between those two groups. Specifically, Mr. Speaker, what this amendment would propose to do is to provide a new time limit on how long a municipality must wait for a response to proposed annexation by a city. And in this situation, Mr. Speaker, you can see how there might be a situation where, if the relationship between the city and the rural municipality might not be as positive as one might hope it would be — and in politics and in governance, this happens from time to time — there may be the opportunity, there may be the instance, Mr. Speaker, where a situation arises between the two sides where the rural municipality is not in favour of the annexation that is being brought forward by this city. And in situations like this, it's important to ensure that there is the necessary mechanism to ensure that the matter is resolved in a timely manner. And so what this does, Mr. Speaker, is puts a new time limit in place so that the city is not left waiting in the event that a municipality is slow-walking an application for annexation, or a response I should say.

And it's not, Mr. Speaker, something that is out of the realm of possibility, so it's necessary and appropriate for our legislation to reflect the current reality. I would be curious, Mr. Speaker — this was not mentioned in the minister's second reading speech — but I would be curious if this is coming out of a particular location, a particular event between a city and a rural municipality where things didn't go as smoothly as perhaps we would hope. So the minister's second reading speech is quiet on that detail. Perhaps through the committee process we're able to see, Mr. Speaker, if this is coming out of that area of interest.

It also, Mr. Speaker, in this first section of the proposed amendment with respect to the relationship between the city and the municipality, it talks about how mediation is required before the Saskatchewan Municipal Board hears and decides an application for annexation. The Municipal Board in this instance, Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, would be acting as a quasi-judicial body that would provide a ruling, basically look at the facts as a party that is not interested directly in either side and to provide some sort of objective opinion on what is the

right course of action.

So what this legislation suggests, Mr. Speaker, instead of automatically bumping it to that level where ruling needs to take place, why not see what could be accomplished through mediation? And, Mr. Speaker, to me that seems like a reasonable step. You know, when two sides can work things out through mediation, that is a favourable outcome as opposed to taking a more adversarial approach. I recognize that from time to time, Mr. Speaker, the adversarial approach to conflict will be there and should be there. And it's appropriate, and we do need the Municipal Board to be in a position where it can make rulings on situations where there is a conflict. That being said, when mediation can do the trick, so to speak, why not encourage that and see if that could be a way of causing a resolution?

It's also, Mr. Speaker, I think very important to, with respect to the amendments that are put forward here, Mr. Speaker, to clear up any sort of misunderstanding or ambiguity there may be about how an application may be amended or withdrawn at any time up until the board completes its review. So this is the idea, Mr. Speaker, that if an issue is bumped to the board to provide a ruling, if in the meantime the two sides can come together and find some sort of agreement or some sort of favourable resolution for this — both sides, on the issue — then why not allow both sides to renew the application and de-escalate any sort of conflict that may be there, Mr. Speaker?

So for this first section at least, Mr. Speaker, this seems like mostly common sense approaches. I know, Mr. Speaker, the amendments that are put forward here in Bill No. 74, *An Act to amend The Cities Act*, it is consistent with the Act to amend *The Municipalities Act* because these are complementary pieces of legislation that address different components of our cities. And so it only does make sense, Mr. Speaker, that if changes are occurring in one Act, we would ensure that the necessary changes are also occurring in the complementary Act. And so in my view, Mr. Speaker, it does seem like it is an appropriate type of change, based on the information that I know through the legislation and the comments of the minister.

It will be interesting, Mr. Speaker, in the weeks and months ahead, to hear from players within the realm of municipal politics as to whether or not these proposed changes are in fact consistent with what will make the relationship between cities and municipalities work more effectively.

The minister in his remarks suggests that there has been a fair amount of consultation that has occurred between the sides, and that is good, Mr. Speaker. So I hope that the proposed changes being brought forward in this section of the amendment are in fact consistent with what individuals who are on the ground at the municipal level do in fact want and see as an appropriate and a responsive action to the current situation.

So that was the first section, Mr. Speaker, that basically addressed the relationship between municipalities and cities. And that's the first section.

The second section, Mr. Speaker, as identified by the minister's second reading speech and as obviously stated in the actual amendments themselves, has to do with the other amendments

that have taken place with respect to *The Municipalities Act* and *The Northern Municipalities Act*. And these proposed amendments, Mr. Speaker, have to do with amendments that would allow cities to add unpaid city utility charges incurred by a tenant to property taxes, provided that the prior notice is given to the tenant and the property owner, and that any utility deposits are applied to the charges. And this is as it relates, Mr. Speaker, to trailers and trailer home . . . [inaudible] . . . Mr. Speaker, as it's identified. This is the notion, Mr. Speaker, that if there are utility payments that are owed at a property due to the neglect of a renter, it allows the city to add those amounts on to the property taxes that the owner of the property would be paying.

Now of course the owner of the property pays those property taxes through the rent that is collected from the property in question, so it's basically, Mr. Speaker, providing a bit more of an incentive in order for the property owner to ensure that the renter is in fact paying utilities and staying on top of things with respect to the property as it relates to utilities that might be delivered through the municipality.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we obviously want all people to pay their bills when it comes to utilities. That ensures that the public services that are provided are able to carry on in a good way. We know from time to time, Mr. Speaker — and this happens with people in different areas of the province and from different walks of life — we know from time to time there are instances where individuals do not keep up with their payments and the issue of arrears comes up and the question of how the municipality gets payment for utilities that are owed.

So this, Mr. Speaker, is bringing the property owner into the equation. One could imagine a situation where utilities are owed by a renter of a location, and when the owner of the location discovers that the utilities owed are being added to the property taxes, I would imagine, Mr. Speaker, that the owner would apply some pressure and some persuasion to the renter in order provide payment for the utilities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this raises a number of important questions I think from the perspective of the municipality and the city and the utility provider but also from the perspective of the owner of the property and the renter, Mr. Speaker. Now one would hope that when an owner of the property rents the property to the renter, that a proper lease is in place and a rental agreement which clearly details what the responsibilities are of the renter with respect to paying the utilities. Now I know there are different levels of attention that are paid by property owners, Mr. Speaker, with respect to leases, and clearly having a detailed list and a rental agreement is the wisest approach because it clearly articulates what the responsibilities are of each side with respect to paying utilities, paying rent, upkeep of the property, and all of those items.

But, Mr. Speaker, by taking this approach, by allowing the owed utilities to be added to the property taxes, it is bringing the owner of the property into the equation in a much more significant way than what had been there previously, at least in my reading of the legislation and my understanding of it.

So I think it is appropriate, Mr. Speaker, to have a discussion as to whether or not it's appropriate to bring the owner of the

property into that position because it really is putting the owner on the hook, so to speak, with respect to utilities that may be owed. One could imagine a situation where the owner then goes after the renter in a way that would encourage the renter to provide payment for back utilities, back payments. Now there could be the situation, Mr. Speaker, where a renter does not appreciate that pressure and the renter decides to leave and go somewhere else. In this situation, Mr. Speaker, it would mean that the owner of the property is on the hook for the payment of those utilities because they've been added to the property taxes which the owner of the property would be paying.

So it's not a minor point because it does have implications for individuals in the province who are property owners. And of course we encourage everyone in the province to pay their utilities. We encourage everyone to pay their taxes, but we know, based on experience and stories that we hear, that this isn't always the case, as we have rules in place for a reason and the need to enforce people to do this.

So I would be curious, Mr. Speaker, on the feedback that has been received from other organizations with respect to the wisdom of this approach, specifically associations related to landlords and those that are in charge of properties.

[19:15]

It does say, Mr. Speaker, that this change was requested by SUMA, Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association. And I could understand why SUMA would be requesting this change, Mr. Speaker, because it provides a greater ability for SUMA to collect monies that are owed. But it is important when, in making any sort of legislative change, it is appropriate to strike the right balance between the request of the urban municipality and other considerations that may be present. And when government is doing any sort of consultation on any type of legislation, it's also necessary to ensure that we're hearing from a variety of perspectives and a variety of interests. And so in this situation it's necessary to hear from SUMA most certainly, as they are the voice for urban municipalities, and we really do appreciate the work that they do here in the province.

But it's also important, Mr. Speaker, to hear from renter associations and from landlord associations with respect to how this change might actually work on the ground and what sort of consequences, either intended or unintended, that it may have for the municipal environment throughout the province. Because what we do want to create, Mr. Speaker, is the type of environment in the province where there are ample properties available to be rented, where we encourage good renting practices by renters, and we also encourage good practices by landlords with respect to the properties that they are in charge of.

So we want to strike the right balance here. We want to ensure that municipalities get their fair share and what they are owed with respect to utilities that they provide and services that they provide. So we want municipalities to receive their taxes, to receive payment for services when they're delivering the utility, Mr. Speaker. We want landlords to be able to collect their rent in order to do well off of their investment because landlords play a very important role in providing good quality housing to many people here in the province. And, Mr. Speaker, we want

renters to be treated with respect, to have affordable accommodations, and to also live up to their end of the rental agreement.

So whenever we're making changes to legislation, when we're looking at possible amendments to *The Cities Act*, it's important to keep all of those components in mind. And it's important to ensure that we are striking the right and correct balance with respect to the needs of municipalities, the needs of landlords, the needs of renters, and not to mention the best interests of all of those groups as well, not just simply their needs, Mr. Speaker. We want all of those organizations to thrive and to do well.

So, Mr. Speaker, the first section that I talked about had to do with the relationship between cities and municipalities as it relates to annexations and as it relates to providing more clarity with respect to the process that is in place when there is a dispute between the city and a rural municipality as it relates to annexation, the notion of giving a different timeline with respect to how long it takes for a municipality to provide comment and feedback on a proposed annexation, basically tightening it up, or not tightening it up necessarily but providing some clear parameters with respect to the time limit that is allowed for a municipality to provide comment on annexation.

And also, Mr. Speaker, the changes in the first section of the proposed amendments deal with the issue of mediation. Essentially if we can prevent this situation from being escalated to a level where it is a conflict and where the municipal board needs to make a ruling and do a hearing, we know, Mr. Speaker, that costs time. We know that costs dollars and, Mr. Speaker, it can also create a situation where there is conflict between the two jurisdictional bodies, and that's not the kind of approach that we want in the province. In all situations when we can have opposing sides come to neutral agreement, come to compromise, put the best interest of citizens in both jurisdictions and citizens of the entire province at the forefront of the concerns, that of course is the approach that we want to take. So that was the first section.

Now the second section, Mr. Speaker, had to do with changes that were being requested by SUMA with respect to back payments that were owed by renters on properties, specifically trailers, and providing the ability of municipalities to go after those amounts through the provision that amounts that are owed could be attached to property taxes, thereby putting the owner on the hook who would be paying the taxes, but who would be collecting the profits through the rent that is acquired because of the rental.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's bringing the landlord, the owner into the equation into a much more substantial and significant way. It could be effective, Mr. Speaker, but we also have to ensure that it's not putting an unnecessary burden on the owner. And we have to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that it is treating the renters properly, and we have to ensure that the municipalities throughout the mix are also receiving the dollars that they are owed for the services that are provided.

So I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that the provisions that are being put forward in the amendment would in fact be talking about

balance, would in fact be talking about compromise, and would in fact be talking about what is the best approach to have all of these interests taken care of. So that is my hope and desire.

Based on the comments made by the minister during his second reading speech, it sounds like, at least at this stage, that most of the input and feedback has been obtained through the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association. I hope that is correct. But it will be interesting, Mr. Speaker, in the coming weeks and months to see if there are other organizations in the province who want to add their two cents on this issue of many cents with respect to who is owed money and who pays it. That's the second component.

The third component, Mr. Speaker, is a very interesting topic because it relates to changes that have been made at the provincial level which are having implications at the municipal level. And on this topic, Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about the New West Partnership Agreement and the Agreement on Internal Trade. So this is the notion, Mr. Speaker, that at the provincial level, the provincial government has decided to enter into agreements with neighbouring provinces with respect to a number of issues but, as I understand it, based on the comments that have been made by members opposite, the main idea and point is to provide greater harmonization within the jurisdictions in order to encourage the smooth operation of activities, either business or otherwise, between the provincial jurisdictions.

At face value, Mr. Speaker, this notion of providing harmonization has merit and makes sense in my view. The catch is, Mr. Speaker, there's another side of the coin. And we need to ensure that as we go down this path of increased harmonization between the jurisdictions, we also have to respect and take heed of the local uniqueness of locations with respect to objectives that they may have. Now these objectives may vary, Mr. Speaker. I think perhaps the most obvious one that would come to my mind right off the top would be when there is a local municipality that is interested in pursuing a certain policy path in order to encourage the well-being of the local area. And one can think of business improvement districts as one example, Mr. Speaker, where local businesses and other organizations have come together in order to make decisions for the interests of that local area and, in so doing, encourage the well-being of all people, encourage the well-being of businesses, of community-based organizations, and then the citizens that would interact with both of those organizations.

So while on the one level, Mr. Speaker, harmonization and coordination between jurisdictions is a good thing — and I'm talking interprovincially that is important — we do have to keep our eye on the ball with respect to how it plays out on the ground when there are local circumstances that require our attention, specifically at the municipal level. And so, Mr. Speaker, we can think of a number of issues here where there may be interests along local procurement, as one example, where a municipality chooses to obtain a service or a good through a local supplier because they see that as a benefit to the local economic region. And, Mr. Speaker, we've heard cities and towns and other municipal jurisdictions chime in on this because they see this as an important component of having strong local economies. And what makes a strong provincial economy, Mr. Speaker, are strong local economies.

So we can't, Mr. Speaker, toss out and ignore the role and responsibilities at the local level simply because we have entered into agreements at the provincial level. As with the comments that I provided in the second section with respect to providing the correct balance between desires of SUMA, landlords, and renters, in the same way, Mr. Speaker, we have to strike the right balance with respect to obligations that we have through the New West Partnership and the Agreement on Internal Trade and then the role of local governments in providing the very best future for their citizens.

This particular change, Mr. Speaker, has to do with the issue of business licensing requirements. And as the minister identified in his second reading speech, it's the notion that if an individual had a business licence in one municipality, the municipality could enter into an arrangement with another municipality, basically allowing the transferable recognition of that business licence.

So it's the notion here, you know, if community X was in a voluntary agreement with community Y, that they would respect each other's process in place with respect to business licences, that the business, if they were setting up shop or pursuing economic opportunity in another community, they wouldn't have to go through the process of acquiring another business licence, but that the business licence in community X would be recognized by the business licence process of community Y. And as the minister stated in his second reading speech, this is coming out of the agreements that the government has entered into with respect to the New West Partnership as well as the Agreement on Internal Trade.

Now the minister said this in his second reading speech, Mr. Speaker, that was provided on November 27, 2012. And at that time, Mr. Speaker, the minister made a few comments and he said:

This will encourage municipalities to reconcile their business licensing regimes similar to what Saskatchewan has done in partnership with the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia regarding the extraprovincial business registration option that became effective this past July.

So it's taken the experience from the provincial level, Mr. Speaker, and applying it to the municipal level. So the notion that Saskatoon and Regina or Saskatoon and Moose Jaw or Saskatoon and Warman — a new city, for example — could have a relationship where they would respect each other's process for business licence approval and that an individual could set up shop in that community in a faster manner if they were looking at expanding their business or providing services in another community.

So, Mr. Speaker, at face value this seems like a reasonable approach to me because coordination is a good thing. And we are in the same province, so if we are able to smooth the process and facilitate how a business may be able to expand its operations throughout the province, at face value, Mr. Speaker, that seems reasonable to me. But as I mentioned in the previous sections, it's important to hear from chambers of commerce in different municipalities and different areas to see just how in fact they feel about this piece of legislation because we wouldn't want to be shoving a piece or foisting a piece of

legislation upon municipalities if they did not agree on it. And I understand by the minister's remarks that it is a voluntary arrangement, but even with that being said, it's necessary that we have the right safeguards in place in order to ensure that we do strike that proper balance between the different levels. So I think that is an important thing to consider.

But we do, Mr. Speaker, I mean we want to encourage businesses to do well. We want to encourage their expansion. We want to encourage their smooth operation in different jurisdictions within a province, between different municipal levels. So if there are steps we can take at the municipal level, I think that is a smart thing. And I realize at times it can be difficult to have municipalities agree on everything, but I hope this would be another opportunity where the ministry has done the proper consultation through SUMA, and SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] for that matter, and any other organization that would have a stake in this issue. I hope that they would have done the necessary consultation and that the necessary discussions would have occurred in order to ensure that the right approach is being pursued here in the legislation.

So that's the third component, Mr. Speaker. It talks about licensing arrangements on a voluntary basis between different jurisdictions within the province of Saskatchewan.

So the first area, as I talked about it, had to do with the relationship between cities and other municipalities as it relates to annexation, providing more clarity around timelines, providing more clarity around the constructive role that mediation can play.

The second component, Mr. Speaker, talked about changes with respect to requests that were made by SUMA as it relates to unpaid utilities and how this can now be added on to property taxes so that municipalities are able to get the monies that are owed to them through the renters eventually in the long run, Mr. Speaker.

And the third component had to do with greater harmonization and smoothing of any sort of differences there may be between municipalities. And as it says in this legislation, so I will have to believe it, Mr. Speaker, that it's on a voluntary basis. And I see that as a good thing because it's better to entice people into the situation as opposed to forcing them into it. So it is voluntary. They can see the merit of it.

So that was the first component of the legislation. That was the second component. That was the third component. And before I conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I do want to make a few remarks on the fourth component, the final component of the proposed amendments to the Bill No. 74, *An Act to amend The Cities Act*. And, Mr. Speaker, this has to do with some changes, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to requirements that the local councils may have with respect to meeting minutes and technology regarding service or filing of assessment appeal notices, sort of the nuts and bolts of running municipalities, Mr. Speaker.

[19:30]

And this request in the fourth section is coming from city solicitors, city assessors, and city clerks, so the people, Mr.

Speaker, who ensure that city business is done well and done properly and in a timely manner. Of course the leadership is provided by elected members of council, but we do know that, as in many levels and orders of government, it's those who are working in the bureaucracy who actually get the job done at the end of day for the delivery of policy and different positions.

So this has to do with some changes in order to ensure that there's proper consistency and that the local level has the ability to do the job that it needs to do. And again, Mr. Speaker, some of these changes came through SUMA, the Saskatchewan Association of City Clerks, and other important consultation. So I hope, Mr. Speaker, that those consultations did in fact take place and that the changes being suggested here in the legislation are in fact consistent with what the local level wants.

So, Mr. Speaker, I've thoroughly appreciated the opportunity and enjoyed the opportunity to provide a few comments on Bill No. 74, *An Act to amend The Cities Act*. I appreciate the fact that members opposite have also appreciated these comments. That warms my heart. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate on this piece of legislation. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of 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 Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 75

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Reiter that **Bill No. 75 — *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter debate this evening as it relates to Bill No. 75, *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act*, and to offer some comments and also to raise some questions that we have as it relates to the intent of this piece of legislation and to seek to ensure that the consultation that we would expect to have occurred to derive this piece of legislation has occurred, Mr. Speaker.

We have important stakeholders all through the North that would be, in the full expectation of the official opposition, would have been involved in building this legislation, communities that are directly impacted by the changes that are being put forward. And it's alleged by government opposite that these communities, that New North itself, that these municipalities through SUMA, have been consulted. But it's certainly our intent to make sure that's the case. And I know over the coming weeks and months it will be our work to be following up with those communities, with New North, with SUMA itself to ensure that that consultation that we would expect to have occurred has occurred.

Quite simply, far too often we see this government push forward changes to legislation without doing the proper consultation, the proper listening, the proper understanding with those whom are impacted. And I think there's no more clear example than the Minister of Labour who continues to bring forward large changes, significant changes to labour legislation without any consultation to those who are impacted — working families all across this province.

So when it relates to Bill No. 75, when we look at the three provisions that have been put forward, what we look to here is to seek an understanding that this bill is in fact in the best interest of those communities in the North. Is this bill in the best interest of Green Lake? Is this bill in the best interest of La Ronge or Air Ronge? Is this bill in the best interest of Timber Bay or Beauval or Ile-a-la-Crosse? Mr. Speaker, these are the kinds of questions that we're going to be having and meetings we'll be having in the days, weeks, and months to come. We'll be travelling throughout the North meeting with these stakeholders. Is this in the best interest of Southend and Pelican Narrows? Is it in the best interest of Cumberland House and Wollaston Lake, Mr. Speaker?

We haven't had any confirmation, Mr. Speaker, from members opposite that in fact these changes reflect the needs and the challenges of the North. And I hear the members working their way up the highway there, and that's right. From Beauval up through Ile-a-la-Crosse and in through Dillon and then Buffalo Narrows and up to La Loche: is this in the best interests of the North? It's awfully important for us to ensure. And you can go up the other way, Mr. Speaker. We can think of La Ronge and Stanley Mission and Missinipe and up further through Wollaston Lake. We need to make sure that we're serving the interests of those northern communities.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the northern communities of Saskatchewan are far too often an afterthought of this government, far too often not considered as it relates to building out legislation or building out programs. The very North, Mr. Speaker, that is a vibrant part of providing the resources and revenues that this province requires and far too often those resources, those revenues bypass the North, Mr. Speaker. And that's why when legislation that's built that directly impacts the North is put together by this government, it's reasonable, it's reasonable that we would question whether or not the proper consultation has occurred with those communities for whom it's impacted.

And we're talking about vibrant communities when we're talking about Creighton and Denare Beach and Pelican Narrows. And in many ways what we have to understand, these are some of the youngest populations in the entire province and growing populations with distinct needs and tremendous opportunity, but not if treated as an afterthought as we've seen far too often by this government.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that basically as we head north, the interests of this government wane, and it's almost as though we hit the forest fringe and hit Prince Albert and hit the bridge that this government can't properly repair, and as we move beyond that place across that bridge we get into the further north and we see communities of great need and communities that need support.

When I look at the minister's comments as it relates to Bill No. 75, I recognize that he's highlighted that some of the changes are brought forward as it relates to a competitiveness strategy, Mr. Speaker. For that there's not a lot of clarity that's been put forward, not a lot of information as to what specific changes are being put forward.

As well, it relates to business licensing and overweight and vehicle permitting, Mr. Speaker, boundary alteration, and specifically municipal procurement, Mr. Speaker. And you know, it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the, it's interesting when we look at what's happening with municipal procurement in this province. The impacts and the decisions are being made at one level. They're being made by government in a unilateral fashion by way of the New West Trade Agreement and, as it's mentioned by the member from Nutana, in a very dictatorial fashion. And now communities are just starting to realize what the impact is.

And so it's going to be, in part it's going to be our work to go out there and make sure we understand what this legislation before us means for these communities. But also it's finally a full realization maybe for some communities about what the New West Partnership means for their community and the fact that the New West Partnership was signed by this government in a way that didn't reflect any consultation with Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, with broad-based ramifications of which we're just realizing with every new piece of legislation that's brought forward. And now a government that's in many ways tying the hands of local communities and of communities themselves from making the decisions that reflect the best interests of those communities or reflect the decisions that those members, those councillors have been democratically elected to make, Mr. Speaker.

And this is something that we need to speak to in this Assembly. It's something that we need to address far too often. We see sweeping changes brought forward by this government that have impacts back to people, back to neighbourhoods, back to schools, and in this case communities but broader than communities — our local economies, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about local procurement strategies, Mr. Speaker. I think it's a fair conversation to talk about making sure that communities have the ability with their public dollar to consider how they might utilize those dollars within their region or within our province. The fact now that that democratic right that they have been elected to fulfill has been taken away from them, their hands are tied, Mr. Speaker, speaks to a government that is not interested in hearing from stakeholders who are directly impacted on decisions that it's making.

And I think specifically we need to look at this New West Trade Agreement. We need to fully understand how this is going to impact cost itself, Mr. Speaker. I hear anecdotally from many that what the impact is, is that this broad-based tendering process is in fact driving the cost up for many of the smaller sized contracts, Mr. Speaker. That's costing us more. It's costing us more and potentially sending public dollars far outside Saskatchewan and certainly not able for us to derive the Saskatchewan benefit or, as the member from Nutana says, not allowing us to capture the Saskatchewan advantage that we should be able to have control of and to have certainty over achieving, Mr. Speaker.

We look a little further here. There's also changes as it relates to northern councils, providing them greater ability to deal with inactive municipal development corporations. And it also clarifies provisions regarding northern hamlet incorporation as well as northern settlement dissolution. These are all important matters, and in some ways some of these may be practical changes. But what we need to fully understand is that these do reflect the needs of these communities throughout New North. We need to make sure that these communities have been heard in this process.

And I know our northern members will be engaging in this consultation. Certainly our MLA from Cumberland will be doing that and certainly our MLA from Athabasca, engaging throughout their constituencies because really this government in a single-handed way making decisions that impact the North, Mr. Speaker, we know this government hasn't had great interest in serving the North in the past, Mr. Speaker. And we can't simply take this government at their word when they say they've consulted and that the changes that are being brought forward reflect the consultation that they've heard. So trust, I guess, don't blame us, Mr. Speaker, for not taking them at their word on this front. We've seen far too often a government that's pushed ahead a reckless legislative agenda, one that hasn't reflected the consultation that's required and one that doesn't reflect the needs of stakeholders.

When we get into this a little further, there's also some changes as it relates to terms of office for members appointed to the Northern Municipal Trust Account Management Board. And those changes, in many ways, look to be about bringing this trust into a level of consistency with municipal terms. This may be quite reasonable, Mr. Speaker, but I know who I will be listening to on this front, Mr. Speaker. It won't be a minister opposite from southern Saskatchewan who's making changes that impact the North unilaterally. Who I'll be listening to on this front, Mr. Speaker, our northern members. It will be the communities all through the North, whether Timber Bay or Green Lake or Beauval or Pelican Narrows or Denare Beach or Creighton, Mr. Speaker. All the way throughout the North, these are the communities that I'll be listening to — that we'll be listening to — and that our MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] will be leading consultation with over the coming weeks and months.

I'd like to also address another item here, Mr. Speaker, and that relates to the third item, and this speaks about improving wording within the bill, improving consistency of language. And this seems to be nothing more than housekeeping in nature at first consideration. Certainly we'll need to ensure that's the case through that consultation, and certainly we'll be ensuring to do that.

In some ways, Mr. Speaker, I see this as a real failed opportunity. I believe that if this government were truly intent on listening and hearing the challenges and opportunities of New North and of our northern municipalities and of the people of the North, there was a tremendous opportunity to bring forward mechanisms and supports that went much, much beyond what was brought forward here. Municipalities all across this province, southern and northern, are facing significant pressures by way of strain on their infrastructure, by way of water quality — drinking water, Mr. Speaker, and waste

water, Mr. Speaker. And what I believe many municipalities, and I understand it to be true for many through the North is it's those sort of mechanisms, those sorts of supports that would have been supported by those municipalities throughout the North. And unfortunately I see this as a missed opportunity to address some of the real challenges that those municipalities are facing.

We'll go focus in a little bit further on some of the changes from a practical perspective. Some of them relate to boundary alteration provisions and improve and expedite the annexation process. This is something we want to really make sure we're getting right because that annexation process is one that certainly is a difficult process at times for municipalities, and we need to make sure that all interests are represented on this front. We need to make sure that we're not simply putting forward a process that's rushed, one that's heavy-handed or on the side of one interest or another, and in fact that we're focused on the best interests of those communities.

And I know annexation can be . . . It's different for many of those northern communities and it's a challenge for many of our southern communities. And I recognize that there's changes that have been brought forward by this government as it relates to annexation and processes and timelines and roles of the municipal board timelines to trigger reviews with the municipal board, Mr. Speaker. But one thing I know is that we want to make sure that we're affording the proper democratic process to these communities to make sure they're serving the best interests of their constituents.

[19:45]

And I know why sometimes these processes take some time. I know in through Estevan and in through Yorkton and in Regina and in communities all across this province, annexation is a process that can be a challenge. What we're making sure through this process, through this consultation is that the interests of communities are served and that we don't simply have a heavy hand of government here, Mr. Speaker, to overhaul processes that we should make sure continue to reflect the ability of communities to be involved with, Mr. Speaker, that those that are elected in those communities can play a role in making sure they're serving their constituents' best interests.

Move on to another little bit here. There's discussion here about this encouraging municipalities to work co-operatively to resolve issues and differences and to promote and support the growth and development occurring in our province and in our communities. That's the statement from the minister. Certainly it seems reasonable in nature, and I believe it's the approach that Saskatchewan people and communities employ when dealing with disputes anyway, seeking that co-operative approach to resolve challenges and pressures. And now what we need to make sure is that the changes that are being brought forward don't tie the hands of those communities when they're entering into dispute resolution because in fact we want to make sure that they have the autonomy that they deserve and require to serve their communities, and in fact that that's not something that's being taken away from them.

There's a second category of amendments that have been put forward as well that are more specific to the North, I

understand. And I understand the minister suggests that they support greater accountability, and he goes on to suggest that the bill includes amendments to assist northern municipalities to address inactive municipal development corporations. We want to make sure that these are done in a practical way and to make sure that they're done in a transparent way, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that those that have been entrusted, those corporations or those dollars are winding these down in an appropriate fashion that's done in a . . . well, that can withstand public scrutiny and that follows processes that serves the best interests of their shareholders and the public at large. Those are the kinds of aspects of these structures that we'll be looking for.

We also recognize that the municipalities involved have a primary responsibility to address these issues by either dissolving the corporation or remedying any non-compliance issues. So it speaks about placing a responsibility back on these communities to make sure they're dealing with any defunct or inactive municipal development corporations, and that would seem reasonable, Mr. Speaker.

But what I want to do is fully understand from those communities through the North whether or not this is in fact in their best interests. And certainly it would seem reasonable that we would want to wind down development corporations that are no longer operational, but we want to make sure that some of those development corporations aren't in fact simply waiting for a period in time for which they may be of great benefit again and, if so, then we want to make sure that we're providing the tools that these communities need to develop their local economies, to serve the people of the North, and to build vibrant, healthy, strong communities for tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

And at the end of it, that has to be the goal for any legislation as it relates to municipalities in this province, whether in the Far North or whether in the South. It has to be taking the opportunity to build healthier, stronger communities for tomorrow and for our future, Mr. Speaker.

And I know the members, our MLAs from the North that know the North well, that live in the North, Mr. Speaker, that speak for the North, that are the voice for the North, Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure we're listening to those members that certainly bring back to us in this Assembly on a regular basis the unique challenges, but also the unique opportunities that exist all through the North, Mr. Speaker, whether it's on the west side, whether it's on the east side, whether it's in the central part of our province, and making sure that we're bringing forward changes that are enabling the kind of progress that I know northerners are seeking, Mr. Speaker, that I know northerners are wanting, Mr. Speaker, and they are seeking progress in this province, Mr. Speaker, and they are seeking progress for their own communities.

So where I get concerned is where we have a government made up of southerners, Mr. Speaker, that make changes that impact the North, Mr. Speaker, with a concern that it's been done with very little consultation with for whom this impacts, Mr. Speaker. And that's where we will serve as the official opposition of this province to make sure that that voice for the North — that voice for all of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — is represented as we're looking at the overhaul and changes as it

relates to municipalities in this province.

We've been talking about some of the changes to the municipalities as it relates to the 16 cities, Mr. Speaker, in this province. We've also been speaking about some of the changes as it relates to the urban municipalities and rural municipalities all across primarily southern Saskatchewan. We want to make sure we're listening to all of those communities and making sure that they've been engaged in this process.

When I'm looking at some of the other changes that have been made and reading through the minister's comments, Mr. Speaker, I understand that this bill also contains some amendments related to northern hamlet incorporation as well as northern settlement dissolution. And this is important for us to make sure . . . reflect the needs of the North and reflect the community structures of the North, reflect the demands of the North which, Mr. Speaker, to be frank are quite different than what many of those members opposite would be aware of, Mr. Speaker. And I know our MLAs for the North are a regular and strong voice for these communities, and I know they'll serve those communities as the voice for the North on these very changes in seeking out and to ensure that these changes in fact serve the best interests of the North. If not, I can guarantee you'll be seeing amendments and challenge and proposition from the official opposition in this province.

To go on, the minister suggests that "The northern hamlet incorporation amendments include a prescribed minimum taxable assessment as a criterion for northern hamlet incorporation." We want to make sure that that criterion, that taxable assessment is set at the appropriate level, Mr. Speaker, and that it doesn't reflect just the southern interests that these members may know, Mr. Speaker. We want to make sure they reflect the northern circumstance.

This amendment will, it's also suggested by the minister opposite that:

This amendment will provide greater consistency between this Act and *The Municipalities Act* with respect to incorporation at the first level of municipal status, and it's intended to ensure municipal capacity at this level.

That's important, Mr. Speaker, but we do need to make sure that those communities that are impacted at that very first stage of municipal development, of municipal incorporation, are served. So when we're looking at some of the changes here, and we're looking at the criterion that's put in place for the hamlet incorporation structure, we really need to make sure that this is reflecting that widespread, diverse, vast land that is the North, Mr. Speaker, and serving not only the geographic demands of the region but serving the people of the region, Mr. Speaker. And that's the sort of information we'll be seeking as we work in the coming weeks, months ahead to ensure that this legislation reflects the needs and captures the opportunities that it must for the North, Mr. Speaker.

It also goes on to talk about the dissolution of northern settlements. And on that front we want to make sure that this is being called for by the North, Mr. Speaker. Is this something that's being pushed upon on the North by politicians of the South, Mr. Speaker? I know it's something that the member for

Athabasca and the member from Cumberland will be establishing in the months moving forward.

One of the last main categories of these amendments and this legislation reflect, as I understand, requests of stakeholders to clarify certain administrative matters such as the signing of council meeting minutes. Sounds reasonable, Mr. Speaker. It sounds to be something of a housekeeping nature, a refinement in legislation that reflects how our councils operate, Mr. Speaker. We'll be making sure that it's in fact reflective of the stakeholders that are mentioned here, those communities all through the North that are building stronger communities every day, working towards strengthening the North through their work in their communities.

It also highlights that there's changes as it relates to consistent terminology regarding service or filing of assessment appeal notices. That sounds very reasonable, Mr. Speaker. Very reasonable, although we'll be doing consultation to make sure that in fact that's the case.

It also talks a bit about adding contact information for appellant agents to assess appeal notices. And it certainly seems like a practical steps to enable the North to work towards some of the opportunities and challenges they're working towards, Mr. Speaker.

So we're looking at many, many changes that are here. These changes, I understand, were initially requested by others in the municipal sector — that's what's stated by the minister, Mr. Speaker — to either *The Cities Act* or *The Municipalities Act*. And what we need to make sure though, Mr. Speaker, when we're looking at these — and I continue to hear about *The Cities Act* from the members opposite, Mr. Speaker — is that there's a unique difference between our 16 cities of the South, Mr. Speaker, and those of the North, those communities, Mr. Speaker, all through the North that are rooted in through a rich and vast land.

Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that those communities' interests are served through this process. And we certainly don't have a lot of certainty with this government when we look at the broader context of how this government's operating in bringing forward legislation. A surprise piece of legislation that's coming forward tomorrow to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to a labour overhaul or labour legislation overhaul of that government — labour legislation that's been built in a co-operative spirit, in a co-operative fashion over the past 100 years, Mr. Speaker, being overhauled in one fell swoop and coming forward tomorrow as a complete surprise to Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people deserve better than a government with a heavy hand. Saskatchewan people deserve better than a government that thinks they know best when it comes to the rights of workers in this province, when it comes to communities in this province, or when it comes to the North, Mr. Speaker.

And I think that listening and a connection to communities would serve this government well, Mr. Speaker, a government that I'm continuing to hear concerns around a detachment to the real issues facing Saskatchewan communities and a disinterest

in the real issues facing Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker.

And so when we're looking at the changes that are proposed as it relates to our northern communities, Mr. Speaker, and I look to our two northern members that are here with us tonight and I know how important it is, whether it's the member from Athabasca as he's driving back through Green Lake and Beauval and Ile-a-la-Crosse and Dillon and Buffalo Narrows and up through La Loche, I know how important it will be to that member to make sure that this bill itself respects the interests of those communities and puts those communities on the kind of footing that they deserve, allowing them to make sure they have the ability to influence and determine a bright future within their communities and for the region as a whole.

I could go through the string of communities through the member from Cumberland's constituency, but there's no need to do that here tonight, Mr. Speaker, because that's the sort of consultation, that's the sort of listening that this official opposition will be doing, led by those MLAs from the North — the member from Athabasca, the member from Cumberland — the voices for the North, Mr. Speaker, who will make sure that the northern interests are served, served, Mr. Speaker, at a time when it seems to often be an afterthought of the current government.

Well, Mr. Speaker, at this point in time we'll have days and weeks and months ahead of us of consultation. We'll have potentially some amendments, potentially proposals for this government, and certainly we'll be bringing back the listening that will occur across this province, back to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. So at this point in time, I adjourn Bill No. 75, *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Rosemont has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 75, *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Agreed. Carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 20:00.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EVENING SITTING
GOVERNMENT ORDERS
ADJOURNED DEBATES
SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 74 — *The Cities Amendment Act, 2012*
Brotten2349
Bill No. 75 — *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012*
Wotherspoon2353

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Brad Wall
Premier

President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Bill Boyd

Minister of the Economy
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff

Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Security Agency
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation

Hon. Kevin Doherty

Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Provincial
Capital Commission

Hon. June Draude

Minister of Social Services
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Dustin Duncan

Minister of Health

Hon. Donna Harpauer

Minister of Crown Investments
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Liquor and Gaming Authority

Hon. Nancy Heppner

Minister of Central Services
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Minister Responsible for the Lean Initiative

Hon. Ken Krawetz

Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

Hon. Russ Marchuk

Minister of Education

Hon. Tim McMillan

Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan
Minister Responsible for Trade
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated

Hon. Don McMorris

Minister of Highways and Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Telecommunications
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company
Minister Responsible for Information
Services Corporation
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation
Minister Responsible for SaskBuilds

Hon. Don Morgan

Minister of Advanced Education
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan
Workers' Compensation Board

Hon. Jim Reiter

Minister of Government Relations
Minister Responsible for First Nations,
Métis and Northern Affairs

Hon. Lyle Stewart

Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Crop
Insurance Corporation

Hon. Christine Tell

Minister Responsible for Corrections and Policing

Hon. Randy Weekes

Minister Responsible for Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Gordon Wyant

Minister of Justice and Attorney General