



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

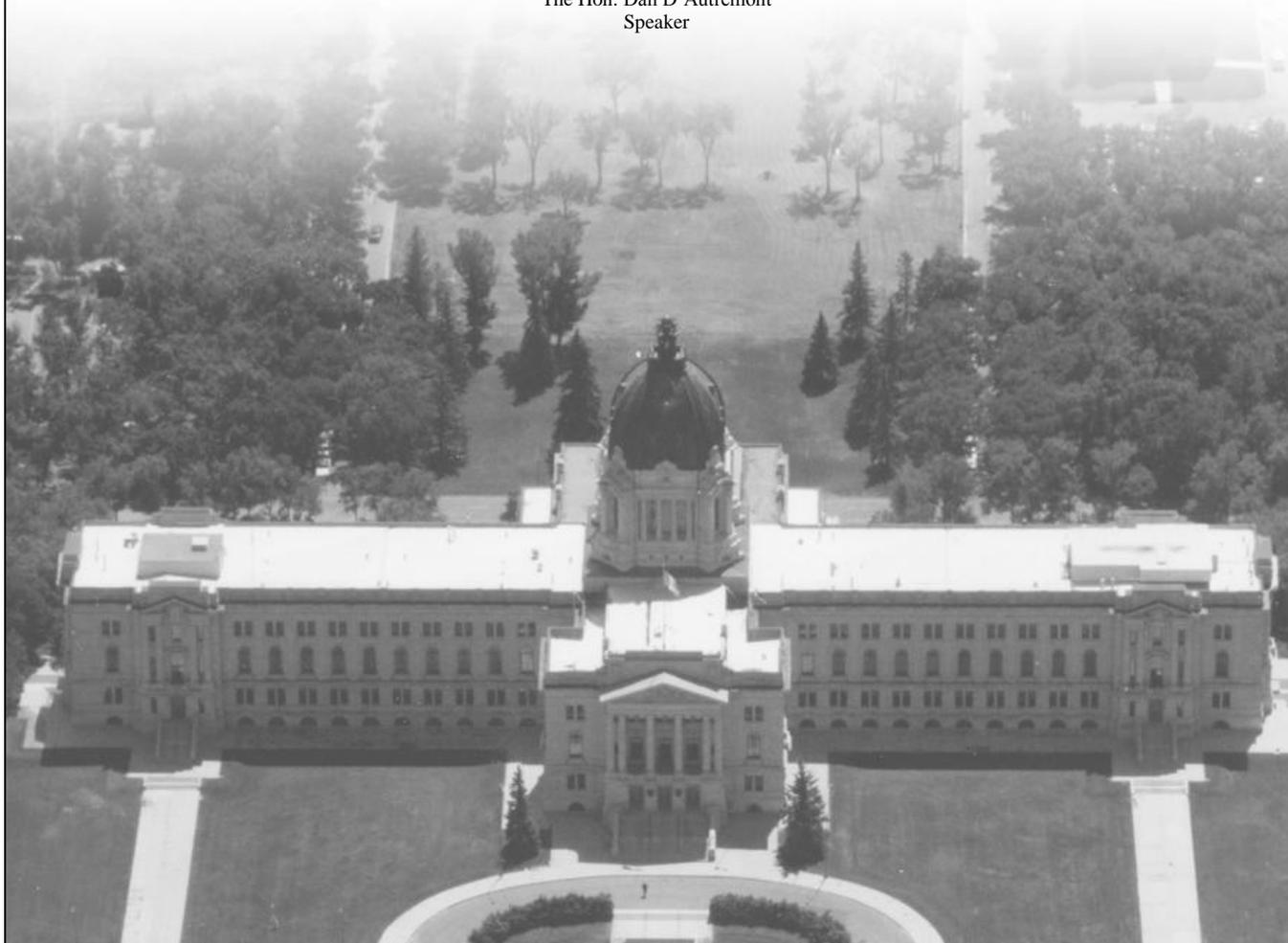
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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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

<b>Name of Member</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>	<b>Constituency</b>
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, Hon. 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]

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Introduction of Page

**The Speaker:** — Before we start the proceedings today, I wish to inform the Assembly that Kayla Malinowski will be returning as a Page for the spring session.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Mr. Makowsky:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and all the members of the Assembly, today I have two fine Regina citizens in your front row, Mr. Speaker, Dwight and Lana Siman. They're constituents of Regina Dewdney. If you could give us a little — there you go — a little wave. Not only do they live in Dewdney, they have a small business in our constituency, Siman Auto Sales. And just like a lot of businesses in Saskatchewan, they're expanding throughout the province as we speak. We'll hear more about them in a few minutes, Mr. Speaker, but I'd ask all members to welcome them to the Assembly.

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the legislature, I'm pleased to introduce two folks in the west gallery, Tracy George and Layton Burton. They are members of the film community who, up until last year, were earning a pretty good living here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and unfortunately that hasn't been the case since the cut to the tax credit. So they're here today as a reminder to the Premier and to the ministers that perhaps they could keep them in mind in this upcoming budget, that we need a real film incentive here. So I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming Layton and Tracy to their legislature today.

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

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly, an individual in your gallery who will be introduced more formally later is Simon Hutton from Yorkton. His family is a very well-known family in Yorkton, and I'd just like everybody to welcome Simon to his Legislative Assembly.

## PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for the reconsideration of passing Bill 85, *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* in this session. And we know the proposed Saskatchewan employment

Act, introduced in December 2012, is a sweeping rewrite of our labour laws including, but not limited to, *The Labour Standards Act*, *The Occupational Health and Safety Act*, health relations reorganization Act, and *The Trade Union Act*.

And since the Act was introduced in December, literally hundreds of hours of study and comparison have been carried out in the interest of due diligence. We know that stable labour relations in all sectors run the risk of being thrown into turmoil as a result of the bill's sweeping changes.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the Government of Saskatchewan to not pass Bill 85, *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* in this current session before the end of May and to place it on a much longer legislative track to ensure greater understanding and support for the new labour law.

Mr. Speaker, I do so present. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Belanger:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

To undertake, as soon as possible, to ensure SaskTel delivers cell service to the Canoe Lake First Nations, along with the adjoining communities of Cole Bay and Jans Bay; Buffalo River First Nations, also known as Dillon, and the neighbouring communities of Michel Village and St. George's Hill; English River First Nations, also known as Patuanak, along with the hamlet of Patuanak; and Birch Narrows First Nations and the community of Turnor Lake, including the neighbouring communities in each of those areas.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have got support for this petition to provide those cellphone service coverage from all throughout the province. And the people that have signed this petition today are primarily from this particular city and Saskatoon as well. And I so present.

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

### Telemiracle 37

**Mr. Norris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the success of the 37th annual Kinsmen Telemiracle held in Saskatoon this past weekend. Once again demonstrating the spirit of generosity that exists in our province, Saskatchewan families, organizations, and corporations came together to raise more than \$5,546,000. After this year's event, Telemiracle has raised more than \$100 million over the years for people across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Telemiracle 37 was made a success by the generous efforts of Saskatchewan people. The numerous talented performers from across the province were also instrumental in Telemiracle's success. This year's impressive lineup included the likes of Bob McGrath, Beverley Mahood, Brad Johner and sons, and Donny Parenteau.

Mr. Speaker, all the funds raised by Telemiracle stay in Saskatchewan and support individuals and families who require special assistance and medical treatment. Regardless of the size of the donation, all contributions to Telemiracle and the Kinsmen Foundation make a real difference in the lives of the recipients and are greatly appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, I will ask this Assembly to recognize another hugely successful Telemiracle and invite all members to join me in thanking all of the volunteers, all of the performers and donors that made Telemiracle such a shining success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Saskatoon this weekend we celebrated an event of which we were all proud, pulling together for a common cause — the 37th annual Telemiracle. For the goal of raising money to meet the needs of Saskatchewan people, Telemiracle showcases the generosity of our province. The 20-hour, on-air event raised over 5.5 million to help Saskatchewan residents in need. These funds, Mr. Speaker, are put towards an array of special needs expenses, from wheelchairs to medi-vans. The money raised will also help those who have to travel for surgeries and exams and helps with their costs.

Each year local talent and those from further afield perform to help make the event a success. The cast of performers included Victoria Banks, Andrea Menard, Jeffery Straker, Donny Parenteau, alongside others like Prism and the indie rock group The Sadies, who recently opened for Neil Young.

After 37 years, Telemiracle and Saskatchewan citizens have raised over \$100 million. This incredible milestone is made possible by our province's people showcasing the best of Saskatchewan — community, caring, and kindness. We thank all those who have donated their time, money, and energies to make this year's Kinsmen Telemiracle another success. Thank you.

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

### Online Campsite Reservation System

**Mr. Hutchinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government is pleased to remind campers that today marks the first day of our online campsite reservation system for the year 2013.

The Saskatchewan parks reserve-a-site system allows campers to book a campsite and pre-purchase their park entry permit, so they can travel to their favourite park with the confidence of knowing their site is assured. More importantly, campers can use the online service to view campsites, check maps and

availability, reserve a site, and manage their bookings.

Now in 2012 there were 60,000 online reservations made, with 13,500 being booked on the opening day. This unprecedented level of interest has provided us with an opportunity to improve this year's online reservation system experience.

We're going to be opening up the site with staggered launch dates to improve the system and spread out web traffic. Reservations will commence on three separate dates. First, March the 4th: today reservations for provincial parks in the north and northwest areas will begin. This will be followed on March 6th by reservations for parks in the southwest and west central areas. And finally on March 8th, reservations will commence for parks in the southeast and east central areas.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage everyone to visit saskparks.net to book their site for this summer. Thank you very much.

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

### Carpeting in the Premier's Office

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you. Today, Mr. Speaker, we would like to take a moment to remember one of our own. On July 20th, 2012, we said goodbye to an indispensable part of our legislature, one who literally laid oneself out for our premiers for over 25 years. Mr. Speaker, we would like to recognize the role of none other than the Premier's carpet. While the Premier's office did not put out the usual official press release notice of the funeral which cost over \$22,000, a freedom of information request did detail the event. It said:

The existing carpet was well over 25 years old, second only to the Legislative Chamber's, and was long past the product life cycle. Further attempts to repair open seams and worn-out areas were becoming futile. The seam problems were also becoming a tripping hazard and the carpet could no longer be cleaned effectively. The condition of the carpet that had exceeded its life cycle did not present an opportunity for reuse. As a part of the installation of the new flooring, the contractor was required to remove the old flooring.

On July 20th, Mr. Speaker, we lost a friend. We are also comforted to hear of its replacement — hardwood flooring. My colleagues and I would like to recognize the contribution of the Premier's carpet, and for the sake of the taxpayers of Saskatchewan who paid over \$22,000 for the replacement, hope that the new flooring does not share a similar fate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Constituent's Heroic Act

**Mr. Makowsky:** — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in this House today to recognize the brave and heroic acts of one of my constituents. Mr. Speaker, on the evening of January 30th, Dwight Siman and his wife, Lana, were on their way to pick up their son from basketball practice when they encountered a four-vehicle collision at a busy Regina

intersection. One of the involved vehicles caught fire as a result of the collision.

Upon witnessing this, Mr. Siman immediately sprung into action to assist the occupant of the burning truck while Lana called 911. Because the truck body was bent in the crash, Mr. Siman was forced to pry the door open using his bare hands. He was able to free the occupant of the vehicle seconds before it burst into flames, preventing this serious accident from becoming far worse.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Siman's quick reaction to rescue the trapped occupant, who happened to be an off-duty police officer, was both selfless and courageous. An official at the Regina Police Service commended Dwight Siman's actions as nothing short of bravery.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that this Assembly commend the brave and selfless actions of Mr. Dwight Siman. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **University of Regina Cougars Win Canada West Championship**

**Mr. Docherty:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to rise today to recognize the University of Regina women's basketball team. This Saturday the Cougars won the Canada West championship in Calgary, beating out the University of Calgary Dinos for the win. Friday night they beat Fraser Valley to advance to the Saturday's final.

The Canada West conference is made up of 16 schools from the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and BC, so this conference title is a huge accomplishment for the University of Regina. Their hard work and determination undoubtedly helped them bring home the gold, and now they can proudly bring the championship banner back to the U of R [University of Regina].

Mr. Speaker, I'm also very proud to say that my niece Madi plays guard for the Cougars. This makes me a little more than Cougar-biased. The Cougars are also one of only six teams to qualify for 2013 national championships which will be hosted by the U of R March 15th to 17th. The Cougars' next challenge will be to win the prestigious national championship on their home court. I'd like to congratulate the U of R on the Canada West Championship win. I wish them the best of luck in a few weeks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **We Day**

**Ms. Campeau:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, Saskatoon had the good fortune of hosting its first We Day. Over 15,000 youth attended and was brought to Saskatchewan by PotashCorp. Mr. Speaker, We Day is an annual event organized by the international charity, Free The Children. This event brings together a generation of youth through an inspirational event and year-long educational

initiative. I had the pleasure of facilitating leadership sessions with an organization called Me to We that supports the work of Free The Children. They facilitated discussions with youth and leadership workshops for First Nations and Métis youth in Saskatchewan.

On the Saturday I, along with many First Nation youth, wrapped up the We Lead program. Mr. Speaker, this is a program that is designed to develop leadership and community engagement amongst self-identified Aboriginal youth. During this program, students outline challenges as well as prospective solutions to these challenges.

Mr. Speaker, We Day is so inspiring that one active Yorkton student hopes to raise \$10,000 by the end of the next school year to build a school in Africa. CEO [chief executive officer] of PotashCorp of Saskatchewan, Bill Doyle, also participated in the event. He used this opportunity to outline the importance of food security. He said of the 860 million people going hungry in the world, half of these are children.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of this Assembly, I would like to congratulate the organizers of this event, and more importantly I would like to acknowledge the charitable spirit and inspiring actions of Saskatchewan's youth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[13:45]

#### **QUESTION PERIOD**

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

#### **IPAC-CO2 and Climate Ventures Inc.**

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, the Premier's pet project, Enterprise Saskatchewan, helped create Climate Ventures Inc. in 2008. In February of that year, the cabinet set up that for-profit company with a \$100,000 grant. The Minister of Finance's signature is there as part of the approval. A month later they gave a second sum of \$99,979, just \$21 shy of the public disclosure threshold — information that's only been exposed through an investigation.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party has spent \$200,000 to set up CVI [Climate Ventures Inc.], which has served as a contractor to another organization the Sask Party government has also arranged and funded, which is IPAC [International Performance Assessment Centre for geologic storage of CO<sub>2</sub>].

A slow leak of disturbing information and investigations has exposed unacceptable conflicts and allegations of millions of dollars wasted. To the minister: why was public money used to set up IPAC . . . or to set up CVI?

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

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2008 there was indeed an OC [order in council] of funding that was provided to the University of Regina from Enterprise Saskatchewan to develop a strategy and business plan for a public-private sector entity to help early stage technology

ventures in Saskatchewan with financing and expertise to commercialize their product.

The U of R [University of Regina] was the entity that hired Mr. Jaffe for this initiative and that is where the creation of Climate Ventures Inc. did come from, under the U of R.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — The question, Mr. Speaker, was why did this government set up CVI using \$200,000 of taxpayers' money. Last June 19th, the minister told the legislature's Crowns committee that, "CVI's a private company. I don't know its structure at all."

That's funny, Mr. Speaker, because her government set it up. She went on to tell that committee, "... the money that was spent on this contract delivered the service and goods." That's wrong, Mr. Speaker, because there was no written contract, as exposed by the investigation. And an internal memo said that more than \$2 million was spent on CVI and that most of it was "spent for no acceptable business reason." Mostly waste, Mr. Speaker. In fact, loads of unneeded computers and equipment still sits in boxes, Mr. Speaker. Why did this minister cover up the facts in committee when asked about her government's role and responsibility as it relates to IPAC and CVI?

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

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was issues, and our government did not deny that there was issues when IPAC was under the management of the U of R. The member opposite alludes to the fact that we were holding it a secret. And yet when I go through all of *Hansard* in committee, when we were answering the members' questions and through the public when it has access to those committees, we said that it was a sole-source contract that was a concern. We said that 16 times, Mr. Speaker. We said that there was a conflict of interest with that contract five times, Mr. Speaker. We said that the contract was high-priced two times, Mr. Speaker.

We also said that once IPAC incorporated and a board was formed, there was issues identified. They took a number of steps. They severed the arrangement with the U of R. They secured the asset of the IT [information technology] equipment and software, Mr. Speaker. They called for a forensic audit, Mr. Speaker, of what happened while it was under the management of the U of R.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the minister is reading through *Hansard* because we have been as well. That minister testified in committee and repeatedly referenced a contract that never existed. In fact in testimony, that minister spoke of a contract 52 times, Mr. Speaker. The minister herself testified on June 19th, I quote, "There was a contract with CVI."

We've since learned through investigation that that wasn't true. No contract existed and it's been described as the CEO of IPAC as nothing more than a handshake to flow money. Despite her

testimony in committee, the minister has since admitted to a reporter that she knew there was no contract. Question to the minister: why did she clearly testify there was a contract when there was no such thing?

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

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, the forensic audit done by Meyers, Norris and Penny references the contract. Whether it was verbal or written, you could call it a contract. I made a mistake when I was interviewed by Geoff Leo on when I knew whether or not there was a signed contract and I mistakenly said to him "... First of all, after saying I'd have to go back through all my notes, I did, after the interview, go back through all my notes, and nowhere in my notes was it indicated that it wasn't signed.

However, you did only have to go to the Provincial Auditor's audit of the agreement between the U of R and IPAC-CO2 in which case she identified quite clearly in her audit that there wasn't a signed contract.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — You know, Mr. Speaker, that government, that minister, has had ample time to do the right thing. We've had three committee hearings on this matter. And back in June, twice we put forward a motion calling on the Provincial Auditor be tasked with an investigation and review on this front. The government members on that side of the Assembly rejected that motion twice, Mr. Speaker. They pushed ahead with their own agenda, Mr. Speaker. They're pretty stubborn.

We called again just a short time ago for the auditor to have a look at the IPAC cover-up. The government sits silent. This government has refused to admit its mistakes, refused to come clean and to provide the answers and accountability that are deserved by Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, why is the Sask Party government opposed to calling on the Provincial Auditor for a full investigation and audit of its IPAC cover-up?

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

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you. Again I have to say that the former CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] minister and myself are very, very poor at a cover-up because ... I'll go through it again. We told the committee that it was a sole-sourced contract that was a concern while it was under the management of the U of R. We told the committee 16 times that it was a sole-sourced contract that was a concern. We told the committee five times that there was a conflict of interest with that contract, Mr. Speaker. We also said twice that it was too highly priced.

So when all of this was discovered when IPAC became incorporated and there was a board formed of there — there were CIC members on that board as well as industry and U of R — this was identified and steps were taken. The management agreement was severed. The agreement with CVI was severed. They did a forensic audit to identify where all the money had

gone prior to it becoming a stand-alone entity, Mr. Speaker. There was a number of audits done. There was an audit done by the Provincial Auditor. And the member opposite should read that because it was an audit of the agreement between the U of R and CVI.

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

### Surgical Initiatives and Funding for Medical Services

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, the electrophysiology lab at the Mosaic Heart Centre at the Regina General Hospital provides diagnostic testing and treatment for patients with abnormal heart rhythms. Is the minister aware of patients who have recently been notified that scheduled procedures have been cancelled and postponed?

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

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Mr. Speaker, I do not at this time have information that procedures have been cancelled at that facility.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill Edwards is here with us today in the Assembly. He has an abnormal heartbeat and was scheduled for heart surgery on March 27th to correct the arrhythmia. Receiving this surgery would mean a significant reduction in the number of prescriptions that Bill would have to take. It would improve his overall health and his quality of life.

Bill received a call from the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region informing him that his procedure, scheduled on March 27th, was cancelled and that it would be tentatively rescheduled for April 9th. However he was told that that April 9th surgery was dependent on the spring budget, Mr. Speaker.

To the minister: are surgeries at the Mosaic Heart Centre being cancelled because of a lack of funding? And if so, why?

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

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, when you look at surgical procedures in this province and setting a goal, Mr. Speaker, it's fair to say that no government in the history of this province have set goals to deal with surgical wait times like this government.

Mr. Speaker, we're working very hard to ensure that patients have access to surgery within six months by the end of this fiscal year, Mr. Speaker. We know that right now we're at about 90 per cent of the way there, Mr. Speaker. Ultimately we want to get to a position where we can offer surgery within three months by March of 2014. Mr. Speaker, even today we're at 78 per cent of the way there.

But we still know that there's more work to do, Mr. Speaker, particularly here in Regina Qu'Appelle. That's why, Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to meet with the board and the CEO to work with them to ensure that they're getting back on track in terms of their capacity issues, as well as on track on

their surgical wait times, Mr. Speaker. But I think it's fair to say that no government has worked as hard as this one to get our wait times down across Canada.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, this is a specific individual here in Regina who was told that he only had a tentative date for surgery because of budget concerns. In 2009 the electrophysiology lab opened, largely due to the generosity of Kinsmen Telemiracle, Mr. Speaker, that donated \$1.25 million to the Hospitals of Regina Foundation. And this weekend we once again saw the unmatched generosity of Saskatchewan people in looking out for their neighbours.

Saskatchewan people have made a commitment and have given to this project, Mr. Speaker, and they expect the government to do the same. My question to the minister: is the future of the electrophysiology lab at the Mosaic Heart Centre uncertain or will the necessary funding be provided in the spring budget?

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

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly we want to make sure that we're able to offer surgery within our system here in Saskatchewan in a timely fashion. That's why we've worked with health regions across this province, within the health system, with health providers in providing to date over 111 million additional dollars for surgeries in just the past three years, Mr. Speaker. And certainly I think members opposite and the public will see that this government will continue its support of the surgical initiative, Mr. Speaker.

And so while we certainly . . . Mr. Speaker, certainly we want to make sure that people are offered surgery in a timely fashion. I think it's fair to say that, Mr. Speaker, when you look, for example — just picking out a number in terms of the benchmark — when you look at people waiting longer than 18 months for surgery in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, in 2004 when the government of the day finally got around to publicizing the waits in this province, there were nearly 6,000 people waiting more than a year and a half for surgery, Mr. Speaker. That number we now count by the dozens, not by the thousands, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to continue to make progress where that government failed.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister was clearly asked if the future of the electrophysiology lab at the Mosaic Heart Centre was certain and he did not answer that question.

Mr. Speaker, throughout Saskatchewan, patients and families are concerned about the possible reduction of health care services, especially as this relates to the spring budget. Today the example, Mr. Speaker, is the Heart Centre but we are hearing rumours of other cuts and reductions and services across Saskatchewan coming through the budget. My question to the minister: what other services and procedures, Mr. Speaker, are up on the chopping block as a result of the upcoming spring budget?

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

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Mr. Speaker, well certainly we'll make the offer to look into this particular situation with the gentleman that is here in the Chamber, but to specifically answer the member's question, he asked what else is up in this budget, Mr. Speaker. Well I can tell you this. The number of surgeries that are going to be performed in this province this year going forward are going to be up, Mr. Speaker. The number of diagnostic procedures that are going to be performed in this province, Mr. Speaker, are going to be going up this year. And, Mr. Speaker, certainly we'll stand on our record in terms of the surgical initiatives.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has been able to recruit one of the leading neurologists, Mr. Speaker, to the U of S [University of Saskatchewan]. He's the head of . . . the new unified head of surgery for the U of S and the Saskatoon Health Region. And he said this, and I quote: Mendez — Ivar Mendez is his name — said to *The StarPhoenix*, was "tremendously impressed with the provincial government's surgical wait time," said, "This has never been heard of in the country . . . I think that this will be the model for the rest of the country," Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Insurance Rates for Motorcycles

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 15th, SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] released its proposal for a new tax on every driver in the province and a 77 per cent increase on motorcycle licensing. Under this totally unreasonable plan by the Sask Party, motorcycle riders with 20 years of riding experience, with accident-free records, and who paid out of pocket to take a motorcycle safe driving course, will see their rates skyrocket. This increase may force motorcyclists to sell their bikes and could kill local small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, does this minister believe the 77 per cent increase is fair for the people of Saskatchewan?

[14:00]

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

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as it has been quite clearly explained that within insurance, the premiums that are collected is supposed to cover the claims that come in. And in the case of motorcycles, that hasn't been the case. There has been a \$9 million shortfall. However, Mr. Speaker, we too have heard from different motorcycle riders. We know that what SGI has proposed is quite considerable hike for a number of riders, and we'll be looking at a number of options.

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — The fact is the Sask Party government doesn't listen and does not consult. The last time the Premier made a

huge mistake, he refused to listen to those most impacted, to the film industry. People in Saskatchewan take the Sask Party consultations with a block of salt.

With this massive rate hike and new tax already on its way to the Saskatchewan rate review panel, now we hear that the Sask Party hadn't done its homework. They didn't listen, didn't consult, and didn't consider other common sense options for the Crown insurance company.

To the Premier: other than checking Twitter on his iPad, what is his plan to listen to the people of Saskatchewan? Will the Premier definitively, definitively state today he is pulling his totally unreasonable application?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the minister in charge of Crown Investments.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the mechanism that the Crowns use in order to look at different rate increases or decreases is the same process that was used when the NDP [New Democratic Party] were in government. We have a rate review panel that does public consultations. They come forward with recommendations and then the government as a whole takes a look at those recommendations.

There is obviously going to be issues with the motorcycle rate increases. And our government has, even though there will be public consultations that will take place, it's already said we're going to be looking at options, obviously. But however, those public consultations, as it was when the NDP were in government, is conducted by the rate review panel.

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — Or on Twitter as we heard last week, Mr. Speaker. New Democrats listen to Saskatchewan people, and what we hear is that they want safer roads and they want to be rewarded instead of punished when they are making safe decisions. Currently one only needs to take a written exam to get on a motorbike. There is no additional road test or safety training expected. In fact if motorcycle riders want a safety course, they pay for it out of pocket. With a 77 per cent increase in their insurance, I don't see any middle-class families having the money left over to pay for the \$400 safety training course.

Will the minister consider rates that encourage safe rider training rather than discourage safety training courses?

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

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer is yes.

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

#### Standardized Testing and Student Achievement

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education has been making a lot of claims while defending his agenda with his push towards standardized tests for students as young

as grade 4, Mr. Speaker. He says standardized tests won't be the only tool that's being used. He said the program won't be used to compare schools. He said funding won't be tied to results. He said this will not be the American model.

He's been saying all sorts of things about his agenda, about what it isn't, Mr. Speaker, but he hasn't said very much about what it is. Mr. Speaker, quite simply, why is the minister pushing forward the Sask Party's standardized testing plan for Saskatchewan students?

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

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member opposite for the question. I'll tell you what the student achievement initiative is. The initiative is about early learning. It's about student engagement. It's about student transitions. It's about consistency and standards. Mr. Speaker, we have 28 school divisions in our province, and across the province we have a great deal of absolutely fine work being done by the 13,000 teachers that are in those school divisions. Work that's taking place now, for example, is examples of testing material that goes on absolutely every day, and those school divisions are quite anxious to share that information with us. They're very proud of those results and I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the results are actually dramatic. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — That's strange, Mr. Speaker. The minister says this is about early learning. Yet, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't start till grade 4, and in fact under that budget and that minister, early learning is being cut in this minister. Could he explain more?

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

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government is very concerned about student outcomes and increasing student outcomes for children. The student achievement initiative begins with the early years. In fact, we use a couple of tools, one of them the early development instruments which helps identify those children that are most vulnerable. Secondly, we'll be using an early years evaluation tool that will help kindergarten and pre-kindergarten teachers ensure that students, before they enter the grade 1 program, are ready for learning. We have increased the number of pre-kindergarten programs by 85 per cent since coming into power, for a total of 286 kindergarten programs in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Early years is just the beginning of the journey to student success. High school completion is the end product. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, when the minister was asked by the media to explain what evidence there was to support his standardized testing plan, he said there was none, Mr. Speaker. He said explicitly he didn't have any evidence. And that's why people in Saskatchewan are questioning this government's push towards standardized testing without any rationale, and without listening and consulting with Saskatchewan teachers and parents. Despite all of this, the

minister is already spending taxpayer dollars on his agenda. Mr. Speaker, why is the minister diverting already thin education dollars away from real learning for his standardized testing agenda in this province?

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

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's all about student outcomes. The evidence to support enhanced outcomes is evident. Mr. Speaker, the good work that teachers are doing in our classrooms manifests itself time and time again. This is not a high-stakes American model that will be attached to funding or ranking schools or ranking teachers. It's a Saskatchewan product for Saskatchewan students developed by Saskatchewan teachers, and we will be using that evidence to improve student outcomes. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, it's common sense and known across Saskatchewan that students from lower socio-economics need support to do better in schools and that cutting resources and straining classroom impacts all students. There's evidence to support that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it just doesn't make sense to be pushing standardized testing instead of supporting the classroom and students' needs. That includes educational assistants to help children with special learning needs, and proper education funding.

Mr. Speaker, why would the government spend precious taxpayers' dollars on standardized testing instead of putting those funds into where it's most needed and directing it to work for Saskatchewan students all across Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's already happening. Chinook School Division, for example, has been using a balanced literacy approach to improve student outcomes in reading.

Year 1 of the program, 63 per cent of the students assessed achieved grade level. Four years later, that number rose to 84 per cent. Mr. Speaker, for us to want to even go there and remove that would be foolhardy. Those kind of results in our classrooms are dramatic, and I salute the teachers for achieving those results. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, it's an interesting time in education and the stakes are high. This is a time where there's strain on the classroom, where we see cuts to educational assistants, where we see classes that are bursting at the seams. We have schools that are unbuilt, where we aren't properly funding educational as an additional language. And this minister's going to invest in testing instead of teaching, Mr. Speaker, in a very narrow-minded pursuit, with no evidence to support what he's doing.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government pushing forward its own

agenda that's been proven to be ineffective and narrow-minded and not in the best interests of students in Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Marchuk:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is not about process; this is about the students. We have a 70 per cent high school completion rate across the province and, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that's not acceptable. Furthermore we have a 30 per cent high school completion rate for our First Nations and Métis children and that's not acceptable. We need to do better than that, Mr. Speaker, and we will.

#### TABLING OF COMMUNICATION

**The Speaker:** — Before orders of the day, I wish to table a communiqué from the Lieutenant Governor:

Pursuant to section 67 of *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 2007*, I hereby inform the Assembly of the membership of the Board of Internal Economy effective February the 7th, 2013: Hon. Dan D'Autremont, Chair; Hon. Nancy Heppner; Hon. June Draude; Jeremy Harrison; Doreen Eagles; David Forbes; Warren McCall.

Yours sincerely, Lieutenant Governor, Vaughn Solomon Schofield.

I recognize the Government Deputy House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — I ask for leave to move three motions regarding amendments to the standing orders, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The Deputy Government House Leader has asked for leave to move three motions regarding memberships. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

#### MOTIONS

##### Membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Mr. Speaker, I move:

That notwithstanding rules 121 and 141(1), the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall consist of eight members, including two opposition members, for the duration of the 27th legislature.

I so move.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Deputy Government House Leader:

That notwithstanding rules 121 and 141(1), the composition of the Standing Committee on Public

Accounts shall consist of eight members, including two opposition members, for the duration of the 27th legislature.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Speaker:** — All in favour say aye.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Aye.

**The Speaker:** — All opposed say nay. The ayes have it. Carried. I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

#### Amendments to Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly* be amended by adding the following after rule 15(5):

15(6) Any item of business standing in the name of a minister may be moved by any other minister in accordance with the conventions which permits ministers to act for each other on the grounds of the collective nature of the government.

15(7) Paragraph (6) of this rule shall apply to the Government House Leader when he or she is not a minister but is a member of Executive Council.

I so move.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Deputy Government House Leader:

That the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly* be amended by adding the following after rule 15(5):

15(6) Any item of business standing in the name of a minister may be moved by any other minister in accordance with the conventions which permits ministers to act for each other on the grounds of their collective nature of the government.

15(7) Paragraph (6) of this rule shall apply to the Government House Leader when he or she is not a minister but is a member of Executive Council.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? All those in favour say aye.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Aye.

**The Speaker:** — All those opposed say nay. The ayes have it. Carried.

I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly* be amended by adding the following after rule 19(4):

19(5) When the Government House Leader is a member of Executive Council but not a minister of the Crown, he or she may be permitted to answer questions in accordance with rule 19(2).

I so move.

[14:15]

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Deputy Government House Leader:

That the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly* be amended by adding the following after rule 19(4):

19(5) When the Government House Leader is a member of Executive Council but not a minister of the Crown, he or she may be permitted to answer questions in accordance with rule 19(2).

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Speaker:** — All in favour say aye.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Aye.

**The Speaker:** — All opposed say nay. The ayes have it. Carried.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

#### ADJOURNED DEBATES

#### SECOND READINGS

##### Bill No. 76

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Reiter that **Bill No. 76 — *The Municipal Board Amendment Act, 2012*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill No. 76, *An Act to amend The Municipal Board Act and to make related amendments to other Acts*.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, legislation related to municipalities, to the boards, all of the Acts related to municipalities usually arises when there's been a request from a municipality or a request from somebody within the bureaucracy here in Regina around a particular problem that has arisen. So normally the way to look at these bills is to try to

figure out what the problem is and how that problem is going to be solved.

Mr. Speaker, in looking at this particular legislation the minister does set out some rationale for proceeding with the legislation. But I'm not certain that the specific incidents or situations that have triggered this request for legislation have really been laid out in this second reading speech by the minister or in the legislation and the explanation itself. And so what that means is we need to speculate about why this particular legislation has been presented today.

So let's first take a look and see what the minister says it's about. And then we'll see whether the request that he's made matches with what we see in the bill or what we don't see in the bill, which is probably more the problem or difficulty that we have.

So, Mr. Speaker, the minister said that it's going to first “. . . improve the Saskatchewan Municipal Board's processes and abilities related to municipal boundary alteration applications or annexations where the municipalities involved cannot reach agreement.” Now that looks sort of straightforward, but what we need to look at is what are the particular problems that have triggered this particular legislation and what are the suggestions that have been made by the minister to try to fix some of these things.

Now the other area that appears to be identified, although it's not as clear, is that there's been requests from boards and from the ministry to update the appointment provisions around part-time members, members' pension plans, and to correct some wording and remove outdated references. Now that looks to me like it might be some of the standard changes that are requested by people within ministries when legislation is opened for amendment. But let's go and take a look at the bill and see what it is that's being done and whether or not this can accomplish that.

But before I do that, I want to see if some of the situations that we know have happened in the province are the situations that have triggered this legislation. So is it the situation around the city of Yorkton and surrounding rural municipalities, where there's been some dispute as to where the boundaries should be and how services should be provided as new subdivisions or new housing developments are created on the edge of the city of Yorkton? So it could be that there's something that comes from there.

Or it could be the very public issue that arose between the city of Regina and the rural municipality of Sherwood around the development of some of the industrial lands around the city of Regina and the fact that there were some fairly direct and major disputes where the minister of the Government of Saskatchewan was required to step in and see if something could be done to resolve this, especially as it related to the Kal Tire operation. So it may be that some of this relates to that.

It may also relate to some of the issues around the city of Weyburn with municipalities in that area. And clearly, I think, it also relates to issues around the city of Saskatoon and the rural municipality of Corman Park. All of those particular situations have their own unique characteristics, but the question is

whether this change will assist in dealing with some of those issues.

Now on the practical side, this legislation does go, it appears to me, and attend to a number of the issues that have been raised by the Municipal Board itself. It talks about how members' pension plans are changed if they get appointed to this municipal board. Many of the people that are appointed to do this particular work come from municipalities that have their own pension plans, and the question is whether they're required to go into the provincial pension plan or whether they can stick with their own plan that they've had from before. And it appears that the legislation itself will allow for that particular continuation of the old pension plan to take place.

And so what we have then is under, I guess it's section 10, the amendments to section 10 of the legislation. It allows for appointees to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board to continue to contribute to their previous plan if they so choose. That's an option that looks like it can make some sense. We may end up having to ask some questions about that to totally understand what the consequences are for individuals who are in that particular situation.

There's also provisions that relate to wording in reference to other particular pieces of legislation. We see that the references that are there have been corrected to take into account that there have been changes in quite a few pieces of legislation since this legislation was last presented in the legislature.

Now the major issue appears to be the ability of the . . . relates to the process that the Saskatchewan Municipal Board has whereby it adjudicates municipal boundary alteration. And as we all know, that normally would and most often is a situation where a city or a town — but most likely a city — annexes some land next to it for its future development. And I know that it's always a curious situation, but when you talk to various levels of government, it's the municipalities, the cities, that have the long-term plans, the 50-year and the 75-year plans, because their plans always include annexation of land from their neighbours.

As a province we aren't in the situation where we can annex land from Alberta or Manitoba for the long-term economic viability of the province. But what this particular legislation does, it allows a city to expand the boundaries, to annex land next to them to, well you know, for their long-term economic and social viability.

Now when I looked at the legislation, the very first change that's been made is to say that the Lieutenant Governor . . . Right now the situation is such that the Lieutenant Governor in Council, in other words the Premier and his cabinet, will appoint the members of the Municipal Board. What this amendment proposes is that there be part-time members appointed to the Municipal Board and that these members be appointed by the minister without having to go to cabinet to do it.

Now it's not entirely clear what the purpose of this process is, other than it appears that it would be possible for the minister, without publicity or without the full transparency that comes when an order or a decision is made by order in council in the

cabinet, it would allow the minister to appoint people on a part-time basis to deal with a specific problem. Now it's not entirely clear from the legislation that this provision is there for other than trying to break impasses on the Municipal Board.

It's a bit unusual that you would appoint a board which is to be independent and then have the ability to remove members or add members to change how that board works, on a part-time basis and maybe only for a very specific decision that needs to be made. I think that that's the area where this legislation is not as clear as it could be. Because if the intention is to give the minister the power to influence or override the Saskatchewan Municipal Board, I think we as legislators need to ask quite a few questions.

We know that there can be frustrations that take place within the ministry when these decisions don't go as smoothly as people like and that other remedies can be created to deal with that. But if this change around the part-time members of the board and the ability of the minister to appoint these without having to go through cabinet and all of those types of activities are there to circumvent what is effectively an independent body set up by legislation, then I think we need to ask quite a few questions about this.

Now there are attempts to make sure that the people who are appointed as part-time members have the same qualifications as full-time members, but it still raises this issue of what is the purpose of having the part-time members added into the mix to make these important decisions.

[14:30]

Let's talk about a hypothetical situation because we don't know specifically what this legislation is designed to deal with. But say we had a situation with the city of Moose Jaw and the rural municipalities around the city of Moose Jaw, and the matter was quite contentious politically because it involved a major industrial site that was going to be located in the RM [rural municipality] that the municipality wanted to have, the city of Moose Jaw wanted to have within their taxation base and this particular annexation request had come to the municipal board and there was an impasse at the board.

Is the new legislation set up so that the minister can overcome the impasse by appointing part-time members to change the composition of the board to allow for a decision to be made either for the city of Moose Jaw or against the city of Moose Jaw? I'm not sure we can tell from how the legislation is set up whether that's the intention of the minister.

One of the things that may have helped when we had the second reading speech from the Minister of Municipal Affairs was that we had some actual examples of what they were trying to correct. But it really does raise the question of whether this isn't an administrative or ministry attempt to influence or affect the ability of the Municipal Board to make decisions in contentious situations. Because if in fact it is set up in a way that the part-time members can be appointed in sufficient numbers to override the full-time members, it does always hang as a cloud over their ability to do their work on a day-to-day basis. So we will be requesting further information about this to make sure that we understand the full effect and full import of that

particular clause.

Now it's clearly set out that this power can be used in appropriate situations where there's vacancies created by death or resignation or some other reason, but it still is not entirely clear, I don't think, to us or to the public that this particular provision will not be used, or maybe the better word is abused, to override decisions made by the board. We do have the information from the minister that 88 per cent of the boundary alteration and applications are straightforward and agreed to by everybody, and they don't end up really having to come to this board. But it's clear that it's these contested order alterations that are the ones that are causing the difficulty.

Now where it's clear that there's been much discussion about this, and I know that any time there's been as many, I think, years of discussion around provisions that are changed, there will be people who disagree with the direction that the ministry has taken. At this point we don't know whether there's broad agreement with this or whether there are some people who disagree with it, but we're clearly going to go ahead and take a look at this to make sure that everything is being done appropriately.

So, Mr. Speaker, this particular legislation has positive aspects that we will be supportive of. There are some areas where we have some questions. We're also concerned about the types of situations where the extra power given to the minister outside of the order in council process through cabinet, where that particular process is used, we will want to know why and in what situations that will be used. But, Mr. Speaker, at this point I would adjourn debate on Bill No. 76. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 76. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

#### Bill No. 77

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that **Bill No. 77 — *The Horse Racing Regulation Amendment Act, 2012*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to enter into the debate on Bill No. 77, *An Act to amend The Horse Racing Regulation Act and to make consequential amendments to The Revenue and Financial Services Act and The Revenue Collection Administration Regulations*. And really it's relatively straightforward; what it seems to do is repeal certain things. And as the minister made in her comments, that really this focuses around the parimutuel tax that's on horse racing and the amount that's been collected. And I guess over the course of the years, it's been then turned back to the operators of the horse racing tracks. They've been collecting it and remitting it, and traditionally it's been returned to the industry in the form of grants to track operators.

And interestingly, the minister mentioned in her opening, her comments back in November 26th, that actually the amount in 2011, the total parimutuel tax collected was \$857,000, all of which was returned to the industry. So, Mr. Speaker, that must mean that well over \$8 million dollars, if this is a 10 per cent tax, then I would . . . From my math, there must be approximately or more than \$8 million dollars collected from the racetracks, and this is actually a significant economic activity in our province. And of course we know that, we've often hear about that. And it's an exciting time when people get out to the horse races, and it's one that has grown up over time, you know. We all get pretty excited about that and watching the horses and what this implies.

Interestingly though, you know, as we often think that when you take out a tax — and maybe that's a good thing, and apparently the horse track operators have been asking for this — but I'm curious, now that the tax is gone, and my member from Athabasca actually raised this, is what will happen to that whole in which that tax was collected? Now it won't be collected. Are they anticipating that that will create more income and will take the place of the 857,000, 800,000-plus a year? That's a significant amount of money; that's obviously 10 per cent. How do the operators plan on covering that? Now obviously they were wanting this.

But again we often see second reading speeches not as full, not as complete as they might be. Because again we want to make sure that these operations are sustainable, that they're viable, that they continue on, our job is to make sure there's not unintended consequences. So when you take away this amount of money — and maybe it shouldn't have been a tax in the first place, and that can be debated, but it is what it is — but when you take away that kind of money, nobody's collecting it, how will they make up that difference? It's a significant amount of money, and it's really important that we ask that question. And I know we will be curious about how will that be made up.

And it is unfortunate that the minister wasn't more forthcoming in her comments. I mean she does say that. Essentially this is what she said, and I quote:

Our government remains committed to fiscal responsibility and I believe the repeal of the parimutuel tax is a win-win for both government and the horse racing industry. Eliminating the parimutual tax will allow the horse racing industry to determine how to use the funds for the benefit of the industry.

But the question is the funds won't be there anymore, from what we gather. Maybe they will be. But if there's no tax collected, there will be no tax given, no grants given I assume unless — and this is maybe what we'll find out in the budget coming shortly — is that the grants actually will continue and that it will be costing the government \$850,000. I'm not sure if that's the case. It's unclear because the minister talks about these funds but doesn't say where the funds come from. And I hope that there's not a misunderstanding that the grants will continue. It's not clear at all. And we know that if a tax viability is no longer there that maybe it is time to take a look at it. But 10 per cent is a significant amount of money — \$850,000 on a \$8 million industry, it could have significant impacts.

So while it seems straightforward and it is, as I look at the Act, it is relatively straightforward. You know, the short title, it's not much, and then it talks about that transitional part but doesn't talk about what will replace the \$850,000. It does talk about what every operator will do in the transition and how they must keep and "preserve for six years all books, accounts, records, and documents required by the former provisions" and all of that kind of thing.

I also found it very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that in fact this Act will come into force in less than a month. And what it says is:

Subject to subsection (2), this Act comes into force April 1, 2013.

[and] If this Act is assented to after April 1, 2013, this Act comes into force on assent but is retroactive and is deemed to have been in force on and from April 1, 2013.

So this is a bit of presuming that many things will go forward. And I mean, clearly the government has a majority and will see that this Bill will be passed. I'm not sure if this has been designated as a priority bill or not, but it is interesting that it is doing that. But I can see the point. Clearly the point is that when the horse racing season starts, you want to be on a level playing field, or a level racing course I guess, and so you want to make sure that you don't change things up halfway through a season. So it does make sense.

But as I said earlier, we will have many, many questions about this bill when it comes to the committee, but we're not ready to send it there because I think many of the others will have some points to make. But as I said, it's about the viability, sustainability, because clearly we want to make sure there's no unintended consequences that you're creating an industry up to some significant challenges when they're trying to make up over \$800,000.

Now maybe it's all been worked out, and if it has been worked out it's just really unfortunate that the minister wasn't more clear in her comments to the House when she refers to the funds and when she says eliminating the parimutuel tax will allow the horse racing industry to determine how to use the funds for the benefit of the industry. And as I say, if a tax is not there, then I'm not sure what it means that there will be a pool of funds to distribute. Or are they talking about some sort of a granting system?

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I know there are many bills before the House today that we will want to get to. This isn't a long or elaborate bill, and there's many points and I know that many of my colleagues have many other debates that they would like to get to. And in the meantime, while I continue to talk about horse racing, this race is not over apparently. I'm not near the finish line on this. It may be a photo finish. But as I said, this has a long history in Saskatchewan and you've got to make sure when you have things like horse racing that it's done well.

[14:45]

And I have to say as I was preparing for this, you know, some of the other regulations that happen that are very interesting about horse racing . . . In fact, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you

know this but there should be only one horse racing track in each municipality. I did not know that. But that is the law, that you can only have one horse racing track in each municipality. And I'll just read that:

In any city, town, or village or rural municipality, horse-race meetings or horse-racing may be held at one but not more than one race-course or track in each calendar year.

So this is quite something. So this is again talking about sustainability and viability, that sustainability of the industry. And so clearly we've taken this and we've thought a lot about this and how important it is to make sure that horse racing is done in a way that everything is on a level playing field. Because when you're having this, a lot of work and energy goes into the training and developing of the horses, but also the jockeys and everything, and so you've got to make sure that it's all on the up and up.

I did not know this either, Mr. Speaker, but interestingly the interval between meetings, between horse race meetings, and I'll read this:

Subject to subsection (2), no horse-race meeting shall be opened or conducted upon a race-course or track within ten days of the conclusion of another horse-race meeting or horse-racing upon that race-course or track.

Now I don't know if that rule is still in effect. I mean the track that I keep track of more often than not is Marquis Downs. But I'm not that current that in fact that I attend more than once every couple of weeks or the 10-day rule doesn't really apply to me. And so I feel that it's really, it's interesting.

But this is an important industry and it's important that we get it right. And so as I said, Mr. Speaker, in my earlier comments, and while . . . And I have not got the whole set of regulations before me and I'm not sure if that's the whole set. It might be the whole set, but the one that is really before us is repealing section 6, and that is the tax on parimutuel bets and how that is done and how it's collected and how that process goes. And now they're eliminating that process of the tax. So it won't be collected anymore, but we know that the operators of the horse races, of the tracks, think that's a good idea.

Our question though will be, what happens to that fund of money, that \$850,000? Is there a replacement that they will be getting grants in lieu of? Or are they just counting on business being 10 per cent better and therefore they will have that looked after?

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to move adjournment on Bill No. 77, *An Act to amend The Horse Racing Regulation Act and to make consequential amendments to The Revenue and Financial Services Act and The Revenue Collection Administration Regulations*. I believe I've hit the finish line. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 77, *The Horse Racing Regulation Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

**Bill No. 78**

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Draude that **Bill No. 78 — *The Social Workers Amendment Act, 2012*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and join debate today for the second reading debate of Bill No. 78, *The Social Workers Amendment Act, 2012*. It's made for an interesting read, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the legislation itself, the way the different bodies have weighed in on it such as the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers. And at its base though, Mr. Speaker, I think it seeks to bring more resources to bear through changing the credentialing requirements for social workers, bring more resources to bear in the struggle, in the work to confront mental health treatment in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mental health generally is one of those issues that . . . it's an interesting one in public life, Mr. Speaker. Everybody is affected by mental health issues, but it's often the case that stigma or the fear of being associated with mental health issues for people in the public eye that can serve as a deterrent or as a barrier to participating in raising that awareness and raising the sort of consciousness that should be there around mental health issues.

And so on the one hand, Mr. Speaker, we have tremendous need in the community in terms of mental health issues and the need for treatment and the need for awareness and the need for education. On the other hand, the very sort of consciousness-raising or the public education work that goes to bringing those resources to bear is oftentimes hindered by, again, that fear of engaging on the issue or that the stigma that can surround mental health issues.

So just in that regard alone, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to be here today to participate in this debate. I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak about the importance of bringing resources to bear to help individuals deal with mental health issues and to do a number of things in this debate, Mr. Speaker.

First I'll speak to the content of the bill as I understand it myself, Mr. Speaker. But before I get into that, I'll talk a little bit about the important work that people are doing on the front lines in terms of meeting and treating and counselling and diagnosing and the myriad of work that goes into helping people not just cope but to live successfully and to live up to their potential when dealing with a mental health disorder.

Last week, Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of meeting with individuals at the Regina branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association. And certainly the staff and the people that I and the intern that I'm working with under the Saskatchewan Legislative Internship Program, Jenna Orban, they gave us a great tour of what's going on at the branch. But they gave us a real insight into the kind of safe place that it is for people, the

positive place that it is for people, the way that people feel like they belong and feel like they're valued there, but also that in terms of getting that stability, getting that security, Mr. Speaker, that is so critical when it comes to dealing with mental health issues.

If you don't have that sense of belonging or people alongside you to help cope, it can be a very difficult and very lonely and very . . . oftentimes destructive path of trying to cope, and trying to not just hold your life together but to advance, to meet those goals that we all have, Mr. Speaker, in terms of employment or in terms of family or the way that we interact with community or the many, many things that we all take for granted.

But when you're confronted with a mental health disorder or an illness, that can become not just a challenge in terms of the various diseases or disorders themselves but again, Mr. Speaker, what both staff and people, members at the branch, what they spoke of was that stigma, that perception that is out there on the part of too many people in our society, Mr. Speaker, about people that are going through mental disorders and the way that that can take a problem and make it worse.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I think of the people out there on the front lines that are doing the work to help with healing, to help with stability, to help with the treatment, and again, Mr. Speaker, not just that sort of stabilization work but also to successfully re-transition and the kind of work that the branch is doing around employment and helping doing some of the mentoring and job shadowing and preparing, and also the actual partnerships that are out there in the community.

And again I want to go on record thanking very clearly those that are stepping up in the business community, in the broader community, to join alongside these efforts and to make sure that there are those opportunities of employment. And again, I don't think I need to say too much, Mr. Speaker, but we all know the sense of value that comes from bringing home that paycheque, that sense of accomplishment. And, you know, it's not just that, Mr. Speaker, but there's just the simple basic truth of being able to put bread on the table and keep a roof over your head. And roof over the head, Mr. Speaker, I think about the work that the branch is doing with other community-based partners around providing shelter for those that can be hard to house, Mr. Speaker, but again, some really, really encouraging, really positive work that is taking place at the branch.

So I just want to . . . I know for me they're representative of a lot of other community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, people in government that are working to help those with mental health disorders to make a better life for themselves. So oftentimes we talk about the helping professions, Mr. Speaker, and certainly social workers are there and amongst the first rank.

And so about the bill itself, Mr. Speaker, again referring to the actual items in the legislation and what is being proposed here, again referring to the minister's second reading speech, and I quote, "allow . . ." The minister states, and I quote, "allow qualified clinical social workers to diagnose mental health disorders." Moving down in the speech, Mr. Speaker, "By granting qualified social workers registered with the

Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers or SASW the authority to make mental health related diagnoses, we can improve client services throughout our province.”

Moving further on in the speech from the second reading speech of the minister, “Currently there are only 78 psychologists and 36 psychiatrists working in the Saskatchewan mental health outpatient services.” Continuing the quote: “The Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers has told us that they’re up to 50 social workers who may currently qualify to perform diagnoses.”

Again, Mr. Speaker, if we can bring more resources to bear in aid of those that are faced with mental health disorders and mental health diseases, that is as it should be. And again, making changes in the standard of care such as this, Mr. Speaker, it’s not something that is done lightly.

I know that the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers has given this a lot of thought. What is required is continued scrutiny and careful consideration of how this will be implemented, how this is or is not taken up on by the potential out there in the social worker community. But again, making sure that you have not just the right skills but the right sort of mix of skills is, you know, an ongoing concern. There will need to be careful monitoring of this change to ensure that this is not a downgrading of the standard of care that is provided to individuals — that again that care is being provided in the appropriate manner and to those in the time of need.

So this would, on the face of it, Mr. Speaker, seem to be a positive step. But it’s always on how that foot lands and how the next step is taken after that and the one after that. So we’ll be watching very closely to see how this impacts the wait-lists that we know are out there in terms of people with a mental health disorder or mental health issues that are waiting for that treatment, waiting for diagnosis.

[15:00]

We will be looking very closely to see that the Saskatchewan College of Psychologists is worked with very closely in this regard, and as well that this is an improvement, Mr. Speaker. Because that is of course the main point in these things, is to make sure that we as government are working in conjunction with community and with those who have the expertise, particularly when it comes to something like health care, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that that knowledge and that wisdom that is there, not just with the professionals but in the community as well, to make sure that that is properly marshalled and brought to bear, and that again people are getting the care they need in the time they need it.

So we’ve got more questions about this. But on the face of it, again, Mr. Speaker, it would seem to be a positive step. And we’ll be watching to make sure that this is in fact what it seems to be as a positive step. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I know that other colleagues of mine are interested in participating in debate on other items before the Assembly. So with that, I would move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 78, *The Social Workers Amendment Act, 2012*.

**The Speaker:** — The member has moved adjournment of

debate on Bill No. 78, *The Social Workers Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

### Bill No. 79

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wyant that **Bill No. 79 — *The Representation Act, 2012*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure this afternoon to join in on the discussion on this piece of legislation, Bill No. 79, *The Representation Act, 2012*.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation of course was the surprise that no one asked for here in Saskatchewan. Following the last election, Mr. Speaker, we learned that members opposite had a plan in place in order to add three more politicians to the Legislative Assembly — something, Mr. Speaker, that I don’t recall Saskatchewan people asking for, something that is contrary to what Saskatchewan people have asked for. And it was indeed a surprise that was not welcomed I think by the vast majority of Saskatchewan people.

And when this issue was raised following the election, Mr. Speaker, of course it was a topic that was discussed and brought forward through question period. It was an issue where we saw people signing petitions and people contacting members of the Legislative Assembly, saying how wrong-headed this approach was. And we as an opposition most certainly brought those concerns forward, and we had good debates here in the Legislative Assembly.

Despite all of that, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party was determined to plow ahead with this plan to add three more MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], three more politicians to the Assembly at a cost of millions to the public purse. And at the same time, Mr. Speaker, that this decision was made, we saw other decisions at that time which were asking Saskatchewan people to receive inadequate funding or cuts to important programs or to pay more.

I remember the discussion at the time. There was a large discussion or a large focus on the Western Development Museum and issues with funding at the WDM. There was the request by the Sask Party government to change the rate that seniors would pay for prescription medication. That was a concern. And so what we had, Mr. Speaker, was a situation where it didn’t add up. The Sask Party government was asking seniors to pay more, asking agencies to receive less in order to do the important work that they do. But at the same time they were more than happy, more than pleased, more than willing to spend millions of dollars to increase the size of the legislature on a permanent basis.

And I think that is a real concern, Mr. Speaker, because it talks about the misplaced priorities. There, in my opinion, Mr.

Speaker, was no good reason to increase the numbers of MLAs here in Saskatchewan. If you looked at Saskatchewan vis-à-vis other provinces, we were in a situation where we had a low ratio of constituents to elected representatives. So there was not an argument made when looking at other jurisdictions, and I think that's an important point. So this piece of legislation increases the size of the legislature from 58 to 61.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, in order to do this, the Sask Party changed the formula that determines the calculation of constituencies and the size that is needed. And what they did at that time, Mr. Speaker, was also bring forward their plan to take those who were under 18 years of age, those who are not eligible voters, take them out of the equation to determine the size of the constituencies. And that's a concern for a few reasons.

One, Mr. Speaker, we know as MLAs we have a variety of topics and concerns that come into our constituency offices, a variety of issues that we debate here on the floor of the Assembly, and we don't discriminate, Mr. Speaker, based on age. When a young person comes into one of our offices, most of us do not turn that young person away because of the fact that they're not 18 years of age. Many of the issues that we're facing, Mr. Speaker . . . Today we had a very good discussion about the future of education, the Sask Party's plans for increased standardized testings on the one hand, while not providing the necessary supports to teachers and those in the classroom. So the issues that we focus on, the issues that we talk about here of course involve those who are under 18 years of age.

So tied into this discussion of adding three more MLAs, we must not forget the other aspect to the negative changes that have been made with respect to taking those who are under 18 years of age out of the equation for determining the size of constituencies. Because I think that is ultimately where the most political and the most destructive actions, Mr. Speaker, I think were through that component, in my view.

But this is looking at the product of those changes, Mr. Speaker, the idea of adding the three more MLAs, to changing the formula for how the size of constituencies are determined. And this is the result of the Boundaries Commission that did their work, did their work on the rules that were set by the Sask Party government. And that needs to, I think, be addressed and stated upfront before we have any discussion about the particular details of this legislation. We have to ask ourselves why did the Sask Party government increase the size of the legislature by three MLAs, something that no one asked for in the provincial election, something that I've never received an email, Mr. Speaker, from an individual saying that it was a good idea to increase the number of politicians.

I haven't had a good, in my view, reasoned argument as to why they ought to go down, why we as a province ought to go down that path. To me it would suggest that there were other motives, perhaps motives, Mr. Speaker, with the boundary calculations of not having Sask Party MLAs fight over certain boundaries and seats. It could've been some internal politics to do with the party as one option, Mr. Speaker. But whatever the motive that caused this, whatever the desire and the behind-the-scenes actions that were occurring, what we know, Mr. Speaker, is that

ultimately this is not something that Saskatchewan people want. This is not something that sits well with Saskatchewan people. I talked about the issue of minors coming into our constituency offices and seeking help or seeking advice on a variety of topics. So that's an important point, a very important point, Mr. Speaker. And also very important . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I'm having some difficulty hearing the member. I would suggest that the discussions across the floor should be taken behind the bar.

And I recognize the member from Saskatoon . . . whatever.

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to continue speaking on this piece of legislation. And now I understand why there's noise from members opposite because I think many of the members, especially those in the backbenches, don't like this as well. They see how it is not a wise approach to be adding more politicians to the Assembly. They see how it's a misplaced focus of what the priorities are for Saskatchewan people and what really matters. They see, Mr. Speaker, that it would be better to put the millions of dollars into health care, into education, as opposed to increasing the size of the legislature.

I think many of the members opposite realize this, so the pushing back that we hear from them now, Mr. Speaker, is because there are perhaps a few brave souls on the backbenches of the Sask Party caucus who understand what this was really about, who understand why this was really done, who understand that it is contrary to what they put forward in the election platform, and who understand that this is an action that is not in the best interest of Saskatchewan people, Saskatchewan voters, and Saskatchewan taxpayers.

I think a few of them understand that, Mr. Speaker, but I understand why members of the front bench would be so vocal right now because they have to pretend that this is actually a positive development when everyone in the province, practically everyone in the province, Mr. Speaker, understands and sees what this truly is, and this is the Sask Party being motivated by a cause that is more about what they would see as their own self-interest as opposed to what is best for all Saskatchewan people.

So the Boundary Commission did its work, Mr. Speaker, and came forward with a recommendation adding three constituencies, taking us from 58 MLAs up to 61. The addition of the three more seats, two urban and one rural which is part of Saskatoon and part rural . . . I think the name of that constituency is, Mr. Speaker, is Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota, so it takes in one new suburb and then pies out into a rural area. And so that is the sort of the rural component.

There are a number of changes that are brought forward here, Mr. Speaker, with the boundaries and with the addition of these seats. It of course has adjusted some of the boundaries in particular areas and there's been some changes, based on the review that I've done of the proposed borders, some change in the rural area and most certainly in the city as well. So we do see a few renaming of constituencies based on what might make a little bit more sense given the changes to the boundaries, and we see the addition of some different names as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, following this, following the next election, we will have to become accustomed to some different names for constituencies, and I know whoever the Speaker is at that time, Mr. Speaker, will certainly be up to the challenge of getting that all straight and we'll become familiar with the names as well.

My own constituency, Mr. Speaker, of Saskatoon Massey Place right now, is suggested that a change will occur to Saskatoon Westview and that has to do with some of the boundary changes in the constituency. I actually, with the proposed boundaries, will be losing part of Massey Place proper, the neighbourhood of Massey Place to the member from Fairview right now, Mr. Speaker. So there'd be a minor adjustment there and I think changing the name to Westview, in my view, is an appropriate decision because it could reduce some confusion for voters, for constituents in living in a neighbourhood that's called Massey Place, but not having that tied to their actual MLA who goes by the constituency of Saskatoon Massey Place.

So for my own situation in my constituency that I've been given the honour to serve, Westview makes it a bit more sense, I believe, because it's central to the entire neighbourhood. It's the name of a number of landmarks in the area. It is on the west side of Saskatoon and the name of a school, so there's a good reason, I think, as to why Westview's an appropriate name for the constituency.

So I don't have a particular quibble or problem with that aspect of it, of this change brought forward in Bill No. 79. My problem, Mr. Speaker, goes back to the decision that Sask Party government members made and have the buy-in of least the majority of their caucus that they ought to change the formula for how we calculate the numbers for constituencies and that, Mr. Speaker, we ought to add three more MLAs — something that no one in Saskatchewan has ever approached me about it being a good idea other than certain members from the Sask Party caucus and staffers.

Other than that, Mr. Speaker, I think most people see this as an approach that doesn't make sense, an approach that's more about the Sask Party trying, trying to push their own agenda, stubbornly refusing the criticism from the general public, stubbornly refusing any sort of sound argument as to why this is not a good approach, but just plowing ahead because the political decision had been made to add three more MLAs. So to me it doesn't make sense. I have major problems with the approach.

And with that I will conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, and I'd move to adjourn debate on this piece of legislation. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member from Saskatoon Massey Place has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 59, *The Representation Act, 2012*.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

[15:15]

## Bill No. 80

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Boyd that **Bill No. 80 — *The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2012*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to wade into the debate on Bill No. 80, *The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2012*. One of the things that this bill is proposing to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to increase SaskPower's borrowing limits to . . . the Minister in his opening comments or his second reading comments had said that SaskPower is making a multi-million-dollar capital investment of over 10 to 13 billion to renew and develop necessary infrastructure.

So one of the things this bill is doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is increasing the borrowing needs, borrowing ability of SaskPower which is . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Borrowing, not boring.

**Ms. Chartier:** — Borrowing. It's the first day back, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I'm not fully in gear here with my speaking ability. But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's one thing to borrow if you're investing in infrastructure, but it's another thing when you're borrowing to be able to pay dividends when you've stripped your Crown, when you've stripped your Crowns.

In the 2011-2012 third quarter there was a \$120,000 raid of SaskPower, 120 million raid in 2011-2012, which was . . . What happens, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that means that's increased rates, this means that there will be increased rates to Saskatchewan citizens. For example, on January 1st, 2013, 4.9 per cent increase as of January 1st. So what we do is we increase the borrowing, we strip Crowns. We increase the borrowing capacity and don't allow the Crowns to be sustainable and do what they need.

Why do we have Crowns, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We have them to ensure that people here in Saskatchewan all have access to services. One of the goals is to keep rates reasonable, which isn't the case here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And one of the other goals of having a Crown corporation is to support being able to pay a dividend. A dividend is a completely reasonable thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but when there are additional raids, as I said, in 2011-2012 of 120 million, that's problematic.

In my own constituency last year that received SaskPower — in the city of Saskatoon, it's one of the areas that actually gets its power from SaskPower — we had stories of this time a year ago where pizza shops, one pizza shop in particular, there were constant power outages. So this business owner was losing product, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the power was not being reliable. We have stories of people who were bathing their children by candlelight, which might be kind of fun once or twice, but when you're in the rush of a day, at the end of the day, it quickly loses its lustre after a few times, Mr. Deputy

Speaker.

So we have some concerns that the government instead of strengthening the Crowns is in fact weakening them and making them less viable and is using them to buffer their budget, which they seem to have some serious difficulties with. It is a complete mess, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So rate increases. I know on the SaskPower website it talks about over the next 10 years, and this coincides with the minister talking about over the next 10 years, 13 billion to renew and develop necessary infrastructure. But what comes with that? It will be increased rates to Saskatchewan citizens, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is one of the reasons we have Crown corporations is to ensure that rates are reasonable for Saskatchewan citizens.

So we do have some concerns. Perhaps it is a good business decision to raise the borrowing capacity. And the minister referenced that in his remarks, that because of our growing province and the growing demands, we need to invest in infrastructure. But it is a problem when a government sees a Crown as its own piggy bank and decides that this is something it needs to dip into, which then weakens our Crown sector, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So I think that 4.9 per cent increase on January 1st, I know that there is many middle-class families who don't think that 4.9 percent is certainly not going to make life any easier for them. Increases all across the board makes things more difficult actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I do know that I have colleagues who will be wading into the debate on Bill No. 80, *The Power Corporation Amendment Act*, and we have much more to say about this. Again it is one thing to increase borrowing if you're making smart decisions with the money, but we have some concerns that the government is using the Crowns as their own piggy bank. So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to move to adjourn debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member has moved to adjourn debate on Bill 80, *The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

### Bill No. 81

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Boyd that **Bill No. 81 — *The Global Transportation Hub Authority Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Belanger:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today to speak about Bill 81 in relation to the Global Transportation Hub, Mr. Speaker.

Just very quickly if I can for those that are watching and wondering what the debate is all about, I think it's important that we give, just from our perspective as an opposition group, just to let them know exactly what the bill is all about and what I think what we think that the province and the government is trying to do here, Mr. Speaker. And of course at the outset I

would say that once again they are failing miserably on trying to figure out the challenges attached with the Global Transportation Hub, or GTH as I will keep referencing this point.

And the reference, Mr. Speaker, the concept was very simple. There was rumours as far back as '03 and '04. And certainly those rumours got stronger in '05 when the NDP government was aware that there was an investment opportunity here within the city to make sure that there was an opportunity to regionalize transportation needs and to attract a bunch of companies and to develop what they would simply call as a global transportation operating base or the Global Transportation Hub.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in '05 those discussions became very, very apparent. We know that the city was involved. We know that there was meetings, that there was some discussions. And of course the provincial government at the time, the provincial NDP certainly had a lot of discussion and points that were raised. And I remember having a chat with the Regina South MLA at the time, Mr. Andrew Thomson, Mr. Thomson. And Mr. Thomson was really, really excited about the project. And he was aware what was going on and, Mr. Speaker, he was aware that there was a lot of discussion and talks and a lot of vision plan.

And again the idea was very simple. When we began the process to unveil the Global Transportation Hub, the GTH, we simply wanted to make sure that we'd done all that we can as a province — and certainly the city was involved as well, as well as the RMs — in trying to see how we could not only have strategic, smart investment into the Global Transportation Hub, but how we can make sure it's coordinated and that we don't leave anybody out in the cold, Mr. Speaker.

The concept was very simple, as I said at the outset. You simply put land aside — and in this case it was 2,000 acres of land. You have the partners involved, not only just the city but certainly have the provincial government, certainly have the companies involved and the RMs that skirt the city to be part of this massive opportunity to create a central global transportation centre, so to speak, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that you're highly coordinated because there's a number of main highways that run in that area. And it's an excellent, excellent opportunity to showcase the city and to showcase the co-operation of all the players involved and to make sure that Saskatchewan continues to build for years to come and for future generations, Mr. Speaker.

And as I look at the bill itself, Bill 81, what really jumps out at me, Mr. Speaker, is that the fact that once again the Saskatchewan Party government just don't seem to get it right, Mr. Speaker. They seem to really mess things up when they have the opportunity.

And this is exactly what the process that I have undertaken as an MLA is to tell folks that no matter what the Saskatchewan Party do, or try and run their own parade and try and pat their own backs, Mr. Speaker, the simple fact of the matter: everyone in Saskatchewan, every single person knew that Saskatchewan was going to boom, the economy was going to move. And we're going to see a great opportunity for our province, Mr.

Speaker, primarily because of all the resources we have. Whether it's uranium, whether it's forestry, whether it's potash, whether it's oil and gas, we were very well positioned, Mr. Speaker. We were very well positioned as a province, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we continue to see that growth happen and to sustain that growth for many, many years.

And one of the pillars, Mr. Speaker, was the Global Transportation Hub. The city was quite excited. I believe it became very public in '06 that this was an opportunity, this 2,000 acre site, to coordinate all the transportation need and to have as many businesses located within that transportation hub. It was a very simple process, Mr. Speaker. And once the NDP lost the election in '07, the reins were handed over to the Saskatchewan Party government, in particular the Minister of the Economy. And what we're seeing, Mr. Speaker, is problems after problems after problems created by that minister and by that government, Mr. Speaker, because they simply don't know what they're doing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the 2,000-acre site that we'll make reference to as the GTH site, the Global Transportation Hub site, what I think is going to happen, Mr. Speaker, is that the people are excited about it. The opportunity is here. The companies are certainly, and many more companies are keenly interested in being part of the solutions towards making the Global Transportation Hub happen, to make it very effective, and to make sure that there was really good benefits for years and years to come.

And all the companies got engaged, and all the players got engaged, and the RM and the city were engaged. And then, Mr. Speaker, enter the Minister of the Economy. And what happened, Mr. Speaker? We are now seeing that a lot of companies are simply bypassing the Global Transportation Hub. And we need to ask those companies, why are they doing that? The concept was simple. The opportunity was great. And we encouraged your participation when we were in government. What happened since then, Mr. Speaker, is the Saskatchewan Party simply took over the project, and once again, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing that there are many, many mistakes and many, many errors being created.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if somebody were to ask me which companies bypassed the Global Transportation Hub concept . . . Because at one time there was many, many companies that were interested in being part of this huge project. And certainly, you know, since we've seen that excitement, we've seen the opportunity as an NDP government. And we encouraged the companies to become of a smart growth strategy that the province was certainly undertaking at that time, Mr. Speaker.

And some of the companies that have since vacated, that have since moved from the Global Transportation Hub, Mr. Speaker, are companies like Southland Equipment, companies like Redhead Equipment. And, Mr. Speaker, we were very close, that close to losing Kal Tire to Manitoba. And, Mr. Speaker, what they've done is they've finally decided to locate here, but they would not locate in the Global Transportation Hub area, the 2,000 acres.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we certainly want to be able to ask the questions why. Why are these companies not part of this project

that they were so excited about at the time, Mr. Speaker? And these are some of the questions we have around Bill 81.

The simple reality, Mr. Speaker, was Loblaws and some of the companies that we made reference to in this bill and I'm making reference today, Loblaws was prepared and has continued to be prepared to be the solid player that they are — \$250 million as an anchor for that development, Mr. Speaker, and all the jobs attached to Loblaws in terms of being the anchor for this GTH project.

And we want to recognize them and certainly encourage them and to point out that we are quite interested and keenly interested in continuing to keep Loblaws and many companies like that in Saskatchewan because it's important that we continue building on the economy for the long-term economy of our province and thus the health of our people.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, we encourage Loblaws. We know that they provided a lot of leadership. We continue engaging Loblaws, and we saw that they certainly put their money where their mouth was in terms of making commitments. And now we see a lot of progress being made as a result of Loblaws stores and some of the other stores that are certainly trying to locate within the GTH.

Now, Mr. Speaker, within the GTH area, where was the problem, Mr. Speaker? Where was the confusion? Well as I mentioned at the outset, things were happening very, very good in terms of trying to get the area coordinated because — 2,000 acres of land, having a number of companies engaged, having a number of players like the city themselves, like the RMs that skirt the city — this was the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

And as I look at some of the headlines, Mr. Speaker, that it is just one mistake after another. And what happens now is the minister certainly wasn't aware of all the challenges and the nuances of trying to get this thing organized.

So what happened was he noticed there was one CEO let go, and they tried to find somebody else. And all of a sudden they weren't getting along with some of the partners that were out there. So the minister says, okay, I'm going to legislate control and authority over this area and to do what I want as the minister to try and get this project moving and to try and make sure it happens in the correct tone. But, Mr. Speaker, since his engagement, there have been many, many challenges and many, many problems.

[15:30]

And we know that the city itself, they want to encourage investment. There isn't a city in this world that wouldn't encourage investment. And the Regina city council along with the mayor, they're going to do all they can to encourage investment, to provide jobs because the city itself is a great city. There's great opportunities. And you just see the amount of support and certainly the amount of encouragement that the local leadership have shown towards this project is phenomenal, and certainly the people in the local community would encourage investment as well. There isn't anybody that would not encourage investment.

So that being said, Mr. Speaker, you see how the current government and the minister have muddled their way through this. They have somehow created major, major mistakes. And we don't know, Mr. Speaker, for the life of us, how they can mess things up so quickly, so badly.

And, Mr. Speaker, at the interim we would ask that the players that were decided or the players that decided not to participate in this project, we want to ask the players what happened there. What were the problems? We're going to ask Kal Tire. We're going to ask Southland Equipment. We're going to ask Redhead exactly what were the reasons why you wouldn't be partners in the Global Transportation Hub, the 2,000 acres of coordinating a lot of the transportation needs for the whole area. You're linked to major highways. Why wouldn't you become part of this process?

And, Mr. Speaker, the other question we've got to ask is, in the minister's panicky response to all the problems within the GTH concept, we're going to ask, you know, we should ask . . . There's certainly the question of the proper return on the investment for that area because obviously the city has invested. The RMs have invested. There's a lot of people that have invested a lot of time, a lot of time and a lot more money, Mr. Speaker.

So given the fact that they're prepared to invest all this time and effort and money . . . And they're prepared to sit and meet. They're prepared to do what they can, Mr. Speaker. All they got basically as a response from government in terms of leadership is they're simply saying, look we're taking over the project. We're going to do as we see fit. We're not going to take into account any of the challenges that have been expressed by the companies that have decided to vacate the GTH or the city that may want more for some of the opportunity that is attached to the land. And how about the opportunities that the RMs might miss out on?

We need to ask those questions, Mr. Speaker. And we don't have, we don't have the information in front of us that would really show to the people of Saskatchewan and the people of this local city, this fine local city, the mistakes that were made. We can prove that mistakes that were made by this current government and this current minister, Mr. Speaker.

So I think it is quite clear, it is quite clear that there was a lack of regional planning. And the reason why there was a lack of regional planning is many of the players decided to vacate the process, or in this case of the bill, actually thrown out of the process. And, Mr. Speaker, any time you exclude people that could have some significant information for you, then you're creating a major mistake for the project. And that's exactly what we see has happened here today, Mr. Speaker.

So quite frankly with the bill itself, we look at Bill No. 81, it is rife with problems. There's a lot of challenges attached to the project. Despite the Sask Party's bungling of this project, we're still seeing a lot of optimism and opportunity being seized by the companies that were originally in place to make sure that the Global Transportation Hub happened.

But, Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset, we have to make sure that people are aware of how this particular government and

this minister are messing up a lot of positive projects. There's no question in my mind, from our perspective as the New Democrat opposition, that our whole notion and our whole concept of having smart growth . . . And I tell the people of Saskatchewan, smart growth to me simply means a number of important pillars. Number one is that you engage as many partners as you can. That's what's really key, Mr. Speaker, is that you engage as many partners as you can and as many regions as you can. And this project, the Global Transportation Hub, is similar to the Prince Albert bridge concept, is that you have to have the necessary infrastructure to encourage and foster and develop economic development.

And, Mr. Speaker, we've seen that this government doesn't have the vision not just for the Prince Albert bridge, but they're bungling the Global Transportation Hub concept that the NDP began and that the NDP started, Mr. Speaker. There's no question that we are not going to take our hats off in any way, shape, or form to the Saskatchewan Party. We're not going to sit back and say these guys know what they're doing when it comes to the economy, Mr. Speaker, because evidence has shown time and time again that they're bungling through this great opportunity that Saskatchewan has, the great economy that they inherited. They are not doing the proper consultation. They are not doing the proper steps. They are not doing the proper procedure.

And another example, if it's not the Prince Albert bridge, Mr. Speaker, it's evident in this bill, Bill 81, that they're once again bungling the Global Transportation Hub opportunity because they simply don't know what they're doing, Mr. Speaker. And that's the bottom line, no matter how you look at it. There's evidence galore that goes from one project to one project to another project of how this minister has made a mess of the opportunities that the NDP envisioned for this province just a short number of years ago.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would point out again, I would point out again, under the smart growth strategy we talk about making sure that you have the proper investments and that you have the proper players on board. And I think having regional players and having a regional concept and having our major centres, rural parts of Saskatchewan, and all throughout the province of Saskatchewan, that we have a regional and we have a territorial strategy to make sure that the economy is strengthened in all those areas.

The second pillar of any smart growth strategy, Mr. Speaker, is to make sure that we have the proper human capacity, the people that would be trained for these jobs, the people that would be working some of these jobs. And what does this government do, Mr. Speaker? It goes to war with organized labour. And this is another issue that I think is detrimental to the future of Saskatchewan's economic health, is you simply cannot and should not go to war with the people that are going to work for these industries and the people that are going to make a significant difference in their communities and certainly in our cities as well.

The third point, Mr. Speaker, is it's quite clear that you have to have an environmental conscience. You've got to make sure that we're not throwing the environment under the bus when it comes to this development, that we all, in any development, that

we all have to be conscious that we simply, as one of the phrases being said on a continual basis, we have not inherited this environment from our ancestors. We are simply taking care of it for our children. And, Mr. Speaker, we're stewards of the environment.

So under the smart growth strategy it's very simple. We have to have regional strategies. We have to encourage the private sector. We've got to be very, very visionary and very focused on trying to make the best of the opportunity we have today. We always want to make sure we take care of the working men and women of our province instead of going to war with them. And of course one of the strongest builders is to ensure that the environmental protection of our province to make sure that we don't see the environmental degradation occur under our watch.

And, Mr. Speaker, on all three fronts, we're seeing that the Saskatchewan Party are failing miserably, Mr. Speaker. They're failing miserably.

Now going back to the Global Transportation Hub, Mr. Speaker, the concept as I mentioned at the outset was very simple: that a group of companies that were coming together — the biggest player being Loblaws, a \$250-million anchor — to create a regional transportation yard or a region, and that they would, based on the fact that they are next to a large centre, next to some booming RMs and the fact that they're connected by highways, Mr. Speaker, that this opportunity that the NDP envisioned in '06, that it would be absolutely phenomenal for the city to work in concert with these companies to encourage job creation, to encourage investment, and to encourage profit for these companies, Mr. Speaker. That's something that we will make sure we tell people that's a concept that every party in this Assembly share.

And the most important thing, Mr. Speaker, is we want to make sure that we don't give any partner any kind of disrespect, that we respect all the players that are there. And any time that you don't engage partners, Mr. Speaker, that's really I think a major, major problem. And what I see as a result of this particular bill is that the province and under the particular minister is simply saying, look, we know what's best for the regional transportation hub. We will decide what's going to happen.

Yes, they have been bungling through this whole process, but somehow, Mr. Speaker, they still figure they can figure it out. And many people and many players are saying, and I think they're saying to them, that you have bungled and bungled and bungled once again.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the companies, this is a most telling, important point is that you don't have to listen to a New Democrat MLA on this point, but the evidence will show and it shows here in the headlines that three or four companies decided to opt out of the Global Transportation Hub. And I'll mention to the minister as well, just for the minister's information, that they decided to opt out of the Global Transportation Hub. And the companies that decided to opt out, Mr. Speaker, are Redhead Equipment and Kal Tire and a few other companies.

Now they were originally part of the process. They I think wanted to be part of the process. And the question that we would like to ask as an opposition today is, why did these major

players, the companies that would make a significant difference and investment into our province, why do they walk away from this and decide to relocate elsewhere? And we're sure glad, Mr. Speaker, we're sure glad that they decided to stay in Saskatchewan because the threat of them moving to Manitoba, especially in Kal Tire's case, was very, very real, Mr. Speaker, was very, very real.

Now the question I have is, why did it get to that point? Why did it get to the point where one company was saying, okay, we're not going to locate there, and if you continue giving us problems, we're simply going to relocate, and we'll be doing business in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. And once again this minister bungled through that. And thank goodness that Kal Tire decided at the end of the day that they would locate here but not in the GTH of which they were originally, were certainly viewing as a good place to invest, Mr. Speaker. So I looked at Bill 81 and a big question that we have today is, how could they have bungled this thing so badly?

And now with this bill, they've simply taken over all control of that area. There is no premise from the city's perspective, I don't believe, that excluding them, excluding them from the process would be helpful. I know the city. I don't know this for an absolute certain in terms of value, in terms of dollars, but they've invested into the project. And are they getting value for that investment? The RMs, have they invested in the project? Are they getting value for that investment? Some of the companies that invested into this whole concept, are they getting value, Mr. Speaker? The workers that will be working at some of these sites, do they feel that the long-term health of the GTH should be left to the whims of the government? Well absolutely not, not the way that they've treated working people, Mr. Speaker.

So I think overall there's a lot of questions we have, a lot of questions we have on Bill 81. We don't think in any way, shape, or form, Mr. Speaker, that this particular minister has excelled in handling this particular file. We think that the Global Transportation Hub, the original vision that the NDP had when they embarked on this Global Transportation Hub concept was a grand vision. It is a great vision. And, Mr. Speaker, once again we're seeing, we're seeing how this particular government has been messing up the economy that they're handed, Mr. Speaker. They're taking every opportunity they can to go to war with the working people who've taken every opportunity to throw the environmental regulation and the protection of our environment under the bus. It's not important to them.

And now, Mr. Speaker, we even see them bungling an opportunity such as the Global Transportation Hub to encourage companies to come to Regina, to come to Saskatchewan, to invest in our city, to invest in our people, and to invest in our province, Mr. Speaker. So on all three fronts I give this minister and this government an F minus, F minus, and F minus, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's important that people in Saskatchewan know, people in Saskatchewan know that from our perspective we will never turn and ask advice on how to build an economy from a party that simply inherited the economy and are now messing it up, Mr. Speaker. We simply asked them to do one thing. Now

that you're government, please don't mess it up. And what do they do, Mr. Speaker? They messed it up. So all I've got to say, Mr. Speaker, on that front is we are going to be paying very close attention to how this bill is supposed to help that minister fix the problems that he created.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just seeing more authority going to this particular minister and this government and I don't see any particular solution in the future. We should have, as a province, seized on the opportunity that the Global Transportation Hub provided us many, many years ago, Mr. Speaker. And somehow along the way the Saskatchewan Party mess it up. They mess it up, and they've messed it up. They messed up things all over the province, Mr. Speaker, all over towards . . . for the future of our province in the hopes that we can build a future, a long-lasting, sustainable future, a great, solid economy, Mr. Speaker. They have messed it up, Mr. Speaker. Why? Simply because they were in the wilderness in terms of being government for 16 years, Mr. Speaker. So we can't expect them, we can't expect them to figure it out. But they've been there now for six years, and the six years that they've been there they look like a tired, old government already, Mr. Speaker.

[15:45]

So all I'd point out to the people of Saskatchewan, that the Global Transportation Hub of which that minister has created problems for, Mr. Speaker, that's evidence to me today to tell the people of Saskatchewan one thing, is that the NDP appreciate the private sector. We appreciate investment in our province. We know how to handle investment properly. And if those guys across the way can't get it done, get out of the way, we'll show you how it's done, Mr. Speaker.

We'll show you how you're able to protect your environment, to protect your workers, to attract private sector investment, Mr. Speaker. We can do all that. And we can do it much better than the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, primarily because of the history of the NDP. And certainly the players out there are aware of how well the NDP have done when they had the economy built alongside the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We had a great economy going. We had a great economy building. We had a great thing going. And once again the Saskatchewan Party comes along saying, we can do it better. And, Mr. Speaker, they have failed miserably on that front. They have failed miserably.

In spite of the Sask Party's poor track record of handling the economy, thank goodness we have the private sector investing at the rate they are. Because if they didn't, Saskatchewan would be in a heck of a lot more problems, Mr. Speaker, many more financial problems. And the people across the way can laugh at that, Mr. Speaker, but the fact of the matter is the people of the province understand, and they pay very close attention. And they have seen how the Sask Party has bungled on many fronts, not only to protect the environment fairly or protect the workers. Now they are somehow finding their way to discourage investment into this province. And the good example of that is how this minister has bungled the Global Transportation Hub, Mr. Speaker.

So on that note, I think it's important that the people of Saskatchewan know this. It's that we believe in order to have a

long-term sustainable economy for Saskatchewan, there's a number of principles have to stand out. We have to be a place and a beacon where investment can happen and that many private companies and many big companies out there can come to Saskatchewan and help build that economy and sustain that economy.

The second thing is we have to make sure that we protect the environment, to make sure the environment is not squandered and that we don't pollute our lakes and that we don't destroy our forests and that we protect the land in which we inherited from our children. That's really important as well, Mr. Speaker.

And the final piece, the final piece is that you've got to make sure you protect the working men and women. You've got to make sure you protect them to a point where they're protected wholeheartedly.

And those three basic principles, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, that is smart growth from our perspective. It is very smart growth. And all I'm seeing, Mr. Speaker, from the Saskatchewan Party is big fat Fs on all fronts. They have failed this province. They have failed not only this province, they have failed future generations.

And Bill 81 is a good example of how they bungled things up so bad that they've taken over the projects, taken over the land. And mark my words, Mr. Speaker, the bungling will not stop as a result of this Bill 81. It will simply continue. And I say to this government, maybe you should start figuring out how you can develop the economy instead of just talking about it and bragging about it. So on that front, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 81.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill 81, *The Global Transportation Hub Authority Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

### Bill No. 82

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Krawetz that **Bill No. 82 — *The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2012*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to enter into this debate on Bill 82, *An Act to amend the Saskatchewan Pension Plan Act*, a very significant piece of legislation for sure. As we know, seniors right across Canada and particularly here in Saskatchewan wrestle with income security as they face their retirement years. And we know across Canada this has been a major, major topic. In many ways it's the next social issue of our generation, particularly as you see baby boomers leaving the workforce and entering into the retirement years, and what are we going to do to make sure that they have

provided for themselves enough income so that they can live in a fashion that they've become used to — maybe not extreme or too out there, but one that is reasonable, that we think is decent for senior citizens to live.

And this is not a smaller, insignificant piece of legislation. We know this is something that the Finance ministers have been wrestling with for many years. In fact 2008, 2009 . . . in fact I was just looking at a *Globe and Mail* article here from 2009. I had it in my old file, and the title is “The end of retirement: Who will pay to end the looming pension crisis?” An expanded CPP [Canada Pension Plan] could rescue the nation of inadequate savers from themselves, but at a cost. And that's what's emerging as the next major battle over Canadian social policy.

And so we see this today before us. And it's one that all of us will pay a lot of attention, as all of us, and we hope, will eventually be at that stage where we can retire with a sense of dignity and with a sense of security that all things are looked after. And so this is an important piece of legislation before us, as I said, and we'll have many, many questions in committee about it.

But I do want to say and I do want to set the stage for this because I think that it's one that deserves a fair bit of discussion. Because this session we're talking a lot about pretty major pieces of legislation that affect working men and women. And I'm thinking of Bill 85 particularly, Bill 83, the temporary foreign worker piece of legislation that's coming before us, and of course the review of workers' compensation and the pension bill as well.

And I think that this bill, Bill 82, is one that's right up there in importance as with all of these. Because this does shape the government's approach. This does tell us an awful lot about the government's approach to how we think retirement should be funded. And of course this is a battle that has been raging for many years, and one that Canada can take a lot of pride in terms of the Canadian Pension Plan. And I think that now we look back into the '30s and the '40s, I'm not sure when this plan actually started, but we have a long history of looking after our seniors to make sure they have a sense of dignity. And of course that was of course reignited in the '70s when along came the Guaranteed Income Supplement and the Saskatchewan Income Plan actually with Allan Blakeney put in the extra for the Saskatchewan Income Plan.

And so you had a sense that seniors would be looked after, but clearly we're looking now at more as things . . . government financing is under challenge more and more. How do we make sure seniors have the savings and the ability to look after themselves? And we know that many simply don't have the ability to save and this is a challenge. We know that there is a school of thought out there, and in fact it was the Harper government who actually talked about financial literacy, and if people only knew to save, they would save. But we know for many, far too many, that's clearly not an option. At the end of the day, at the end of the month, when they're looking to pay their bills, savings is a very, very difficult, very difficult bill to pay because there's just too many things — whether it be shelter, whether it be food or whether it be medical supplies — savings seems to be too remote. And yet it's an important one.

It's a very important one.

And it's also one that we think that we should take a lot of time to talk about. You know, in my riding I have many senior buildings. Saskatoon Housing Authority operates them downtown. And every year I have more questions that come up, and one that came up just this time . . . And of course the government now is taking into account some of these plans and we're asking more details about this so we can be sure that everything is okay.

But one senior came up and said, you know, I had savings, about \$10,000. He thought he was doing the right thing. He was trying to save money. He started too late and he didn't have enough. Clearly he didn't save enough to make enough difference. And in fact the unfortunate thing, because he had that savings and it was affording him about 100 or \$200 a month, that because of that he lost his Guaranteed Income Supplement. So he was no further ahead, no further ahead by having that savings and yet he was trying to do the right thing. He saw the ads on TV. He believed in what we all should be doing and that is preparing and doing our share of savings for our retirement years. But it wasn't going to work for him because he didn't break that threshold. Now that threshold is, I think, above 50,000 or 100,000 where you were actually going to get a fair enough return on your savings in your retirement years that you're not going to lose out on the guaranteed income supplement.

Now of course in Saskatchewan if you lose out on your guaranteed income supplement, you also lose out on your Saskatchewan Income Plan. And that's a big deal. That's a big deal. And it's one that we need to make sure, and this'll be one of the questions we have about this plan, is because of its increased contributions and the potential for so much more money to be saved, is there going to be a shelter for people who come in with savings of 40,000, 30,000? Or will they in effect lose what they have because when it comes time to retire that they just don't have enough and they're actually losing out on federal and provincial programs because they have, in that zone, the amount of money that the government will just essentially claw back?

And that's a real heartache because you see seniors who, you know, it's unfortunate, they probably should have bought a car. They should have done something else with \$10,000 but now they've got it and they're going to lose out on a government program. And that wasn't the intention of it. And I don't think anybody would say, well we're going to take your 10,000 back. But the rules are the rules and this happens right across Canada, and it's a big deal.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a very important bill before us. I think it's interesting. I hadn't really thought about it that actually we have a lot of bills that are affecting working men and women, whether it's their pension, Saskatchewan Pension Plan, Workers' Compensation, whether it's a temporary foreign worker, or the Bill 85, the omnibus bill about labour standards. All of this is hugely, hugely important.

I just want to take a minute to reflect on what the minister said, because I always like to think about and take a moment to review what they have to say. And of course he has been to

many of these. And we often read. We read in the *Leader-Post* or *The StarPhoenix* what the Minister of Finance is saying as he's preparing to go to these provincial-federal-territorial meetings, and he's had some, he's been to several that have wrestled with the issues of pensions. And this is a big deal. As I said on one side is, the one side is really lobbying for more CPP, a bigger contribution to CPP, so therefore you would get a much bigger return when you retire. And as well, your employer would be also contributing or on the other side, you have the voluntary savers camp.

And it looks like we're into the voluntary savers camp. I'm not sure. This would be a question that we need to ask the minister: how does he view what's happening with pensions? Because it's one of those challenges we have. You know, it's like so much in this world. It's something we should have started 20 years ago. The next best day is today. And so many things are like that, and this is clearly one of them. I wish I'd started 20 years ago saving money, but you know today is a better day, but you've got to start sometime.

Anyways I do want to take a minute and review what the Minister of Finance had to say. And this again was, you know, that first week of December. We were quite busy here in the House. December 4th is when this bill was introduced for the second time, and the Minister of Finance says, and I quote:

The Saskatchewan Pension Plan provides a unique retirement savings vehicle for individuals with little or no access to occupational pension plans or other retirement savings arrangements. It's the only plan of its kind in Canada, operating at arm's-length from government and offering members professional investment management at institutional costs.

Now you know what's very interesting, Mr. Speaker? I don't know if you know this, but Regina ranks as the second highest union density in Canada. The only one higher than Regina would be Ottawa, and of course the connection would be the public civil service. Here we have a lot, and they have a lot in Ontario. A significant number of people in Saskatchewan actually have pension plans, and I think it is about 40 per cent, and I will . . . Yes, here it is. In Saskatchewan just 40 per cent of workers were covered by a workplace pension plan in 2010.

[16:00]

Now what's interesting about that, Mr. Speaker, is that's fairly close to how many people are covered by unions in this province. I think we're about 27 per cent, actually. It might be higher. But what often goes along with unions is good pensions, and that's critical. And we see that across Canada. And yet we see the removal or the attack on unions and therefore the removal of people who actually have pension plans because that is one of organized labour's most important roles is to ensure not only a fair wage but a fair pension.

And so it's interesting that we talk about those who have no access to occupational pension plans or other retirement savings arrangements. Often they're in the unorganized workplace, and this is a big deal. This is a big deal. Those are probably in the lower income jobs. Those are in the service industry where there's hotels, restaurants, that type of thing, and the retail

sector — all of those areas where you actually don't get paid an awful lot. And as again I said, you know, there is one school of thought out there that if people only knew how to save they would save but the problem was that they can't save because they're just not getting paid enough. They're barely making ends meet and the idea of a pension plan is quite remote for them. They would love to have one and it's a sense of pride actually to have one.

You know, my own son now he's just 27 and he works in an arts organization. They've begun a bit of an RRSP [registered retirement savings plan] thing and he's very happy about it. It's a sense of pride that he's actually contributing and saving and that's a good thing. There's some way of some forced savings and that's very, very important.

And so, Mr. Speaker, this is an important area that we think about in terms of those who have pension plans and those who don't have pension plans. And is this a significant enough tool to actually meet the challenge of those seniors who will be retiring but probably won't have the incomes to actually retire in the style they would like, or worse, if they felt that they would have more money or they would have a better security in place than they would have right now?

So this is a really important issue, you know. And I think that, you know, and it's interesting because he goes on to say:

The [Saskatchewan] plan [can be] . . . an integral part of the retirement savings plans of many Saskatchewan people. The Saskatchewan Pension Plan offers members important benefits such as affordability. You can be a member of the plan regardless of your earnings. This is especially attractive for people with irregular or seasonal earnings such as students, part-time workers, or people who are self-employed.

And those are really, really important. But we just don't want to be misleading those people into believing that they're getting more than what they're actually going to get. And this is always a dilemma, that if you're not giving enough, if you're not contributing enough, that is the basis of what you will get back. And nobody wants to be misled, especially when you're a senior, and as I was saying earlier, when you have to tell them the unfortunate news they just haven't saved enough. They just haven't saved enough, and they really thought they had. They thought they were going to have a little bit of a nest egg where they would be getting a couple hundred dollars a month and that would be a nice thing. But you find out actually because of that, they are losing out on other programs.

So he goes on and talks about how the amendments to the plan are necessary in order to keep the Saskatchewan Pension Plan current with modern times and to make the plan as sound as possible for all members. And they talk about survivor benefits, allowing members to transfer funds from registered pension plans, that type of thing, and increasing the contribution limit from 600 — this was done in 2010 — to 2,500, and allowing transfers up to 10,000, and then modernizing some language.

So again this is one more step along that way of this discussion around what is suitable for seniors. And I am deeply concerned that we're not going far enough, that of course this may be

appropriate for some people, but really to say that this is the answer is clearly, is clearly not the case.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know that as I said earlier . . . And I do want to take a few minutes and talk about this in terms of the Canadian pension plan which I would have liked to have seen more leadership from this government on because I know that this has been talked a lot at the federal level and with the federal minister, Minister Flaherty, who has been really leading the charge on this, that there's been real changes that affect seniors and therefore affect Saskatchewan seniors and therefore has a real impact on what we're debating today.

And of course one of them is the fact that, as I said, that about 60 per cent of Canadians have no workplace pension. And this is really, really a problem. Six out of ten, or three out of five Canadians have no workplace pension. And what they've been told is that many of them should go out and get a pension or an RRSP and that will help them; that will solve the problem. But clearly many, many of them don't do that. In fact over half of them don't. We're down to about . . . I understand about 25 per cent of people actually benefit from that. And so you have that, that happening out there.

So what are we really going to do about the problem of seniors and their income so that they have security? We know that this is going to be a real, real issue and, as I said earlier, particularly for baby boomers as they move into the retirement years.

So there has been a discussion and really, as I said, I wish that this government would have joined in with many of the others who were talking about beefing up the CPP. I think this was a way to make sure that people did actually contribute, and also get the employers on side. And it was a secure way, and if you did it you actually would see some real benefits. And I know that this has been an ongoing discussion. As I said, I was quoting from a newspaper earlier from 2009. But I know that the Canadian Labour Congress, the CLC, has put this forward. And I think this is a really important idea that this government should have taken a look at, you know, and what they talked about. And they've done a lot of . . . They've sent out a lot of materials. And I think both sides of the House have seen this, and really I think it's important that we take some time and think about it.

First off, Canadians would have more pension security. And this is really, really important, that we're not going to be worried about higher inflation, things that happen in the stock market, or the loss of employment. As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this would be a pan-Canadian solution to a pan-Canadian problem. This is not just something that's happening only in Saskatchewan. This is happening right across the country. As baby boomers age, we need to get a handle on this. It prepares us for the future. And really, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see this and we see this in spades, that the current fend-for-yourself pension plan or pension system is not working. It's simply not working, and we need to have a much better, more robust system in place so that all Canadians are protected. We know the system that we have now is leaving too much at risk, and that's a real problem. And we know, unfortunately, that most employers haven't delivered by a whole host of different reasons. But I think it is the fact that while they wish they could have done more, they haven't, and

they haven't been able to for a variety of reasons.

And again these RRSPs or these kind of plans simply don't work. Now it may be an interesting one, an interesting idea at the time, but it simply . . . We need more; we need more. And I think that, as I said, it's interesting. We're dealing with this today, but as we look to the future and the increase in cost of living and that type of thing, that we really need to take a look at how can we make this better for seniors. And that will take some planning and that will take some creative thinking, but it will also take a commitment to do some things that I think are the right thing, and I think we have to take a look at the Canadian pension plan and that's really, really important.

And I think, you know, Mr. Speaker, the groups that the Minister of Finance introduced or talked about are the very groups actually that would benefit from an enhanced CPP program as opposed to a Saskatchewan Pension Plan program, simply because it's much more easily administered, it's across Canada, and you clearly don't have a choice. And there's contributions from both sides.

Low-income seniors would see that, and I think that's an important area. Young workers, because again, you know, it is interesting that the government talks about how, if you've lost track of people, there's a way of transferring their funds into the General Revenue Fund if you don't know where they are. And maybe, you know, the fact of the matter a young person may start working here and work till they're 30 and then move to another province for, you know, the rest of their lives, and they go to retire 35 years later when they're 65. Saskatchewan is way back in their history, way back in their history. And do they have to then go back and find out what happened to their Saskatchewan Pension Plan? Or with all of us, the Canadian pension plan travels with us, and it won't matter where we are in Canada. So that would be a much more reasonable thing to do, to contribute with that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important that we take a look at this, and I think that it is interesting to be talking about this. I want to talk about, a little bit about what's happening in Saskatchewan, you know. As I said earlier, in Saskatchewan just 40 per cent of workers were covered by a workplace pension plan in 2010. And actually we've seen — this is interesting — a marked drop in workplace pension plan coverage with employer plans now covering only 38 per cent of the workforce, down from 46 per cent in 1977.

So, Mr. Speaker, we see a real challenge here in what's going to happen with seniors in terms of income security. And then what happened, it's interesting, in terms of RRSP contributions, only about a quarter of tax filers contributed to an RRSP in 2009, and the median RRSP contribution amounts to just 6 per cent, 6 per cent of available contribution room. So that means for every \$100 that a taxpayer could have put into an RRSP, they put \$6. That's what they could afford; instead of \$100, they put \$6 in. Still something but not, clearly, what they were able to do. And in 2009, 631,000 Saskatchewan tax filers had \$16.2 billion in unused RRSP contribution room. So you can see that in Saskatchewan we're leaving an awful lot of money on the table because we're not making use of the RRSPs, over \$16 billion in unused RRSP contributions.

As well in Saskatchewan, individuals with incomes of 80,000 or more make up 11 per cent of the tax filers, but these people who make more than 80,000 account for 26 per cent of all Saskatchewan tax filers contributing to RRSPs, and 52 per cent of total contributions to RRSPs. And that's, I mean that's great, that's good that they are able to do it, but really what it underlines is those who don't make 80,000 are not participating in this voluntary savings plan. They just don't have the money to do it. If you are making 40 or 50,000, you may contribute \$5 out of \$100, but you're leaving an awful lot of money, or ability, to get those tax breaks but you just can't make those ends meet.

[16:15]

And so this is a big, this is a big challenge in front of us. And so while we have this bill, and on face value, we look at it and we go, what could be wrong with that? What could be wrong with that? Perhaps not much, but really it isn't getting to the heart of the issue. And the heart of the issue is what are you going to do about those low-income earners who will not have enough money to put aside for their retirement years. And they truly do want to.

I mean I actually think \$6 out of \$100 shows at least they're trying and they're aware of it. They're just not putting nearly enough money in there. They're not putting in the other \$94. They're putting in some so they can say, well I'm trying, but clearly we need to do a better job of this.

And this I don't think is the vehicle, and while it's an interesting idea, I think we should be investing more. And this Minister of Finance should've been looking at and really taking a leadership and saying, is there a better way? And I think CPP and those contributions that follow you right across Canada, follow you right across your career, would've been the way to go.

So with this, we will have lots of questions about this. I know I will be very interested in hearing what the minister has to say about his times at the ministerial tables. And why will he be . . . Does he think the other way is just as well. I mean, maybe there is more than one way to do this and if that's what he's saying, I'd be very happy to hear that. And if he's saying he's still championing the CPP increase contributions, then that would be very good news. But we haven't heard that. But I know how the media goes. Sometimes they quote you accurately and sometimes they don't. It's just, maybe there just wasn't enough time in the news story to get the full story in.

But I just have to say that I think this is an important issue. This is an important issue that faces seniors when they reach those golden years and they're trying to figure out between their housing costs, their medical costs, their food costs. And they want to retire with some sort of dignity. And they want to travel a bit. They want to have a cup of coffee. They want to go down and visit with their friends. But as I said, it's very sad when you talk with them later and find out it's hard to make ends meet. And then for seniors who are facing too many challenges, this is just one more that we shouldn't be hoisting upon them.

And so with that, Mr. Speaker, I know many other people want to join into the debate on a variety of topics today, but I am

going to . . . I think if we're ready to go, I'm going to move that we table Bill No. 82, *An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Act*. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — The member has moved adjournment of Bill No. 82, *The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2012*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

### Bill No. 83

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Boyd that **Bill No. 83 — *The Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Vermette:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to join in debate on Bill 83, *The Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services Act*.

I'd just like to, I guess, start out with some opening comments. And I guess we look at the number of immigrants that are coming in, foreign workers, to the province of Saskatchewan, and we're hearing all kinds of different reports about employment opportunities in Saskatchewan. And we want to make sure that there's employment here for all Saskatchewan people, but also if there is skilled jobs that need to be filled, definitely you want to make sure you're recruiting foreign workers to come to the province to fill those needs.

But having said that, I want to make some opening comments that clearly . . . Concerns from many, I guess, leaders — Aboriginal community members, community elders, just workers out there in general asking questions, Saskatchewan people. We want to ensure that Saskatchewan people . . . And I want to talk about our Aboriginal population. We have many First Nations and Métis that are unemployed in our province. There's opportunities for them. And we've seen some of the comments made by Professor Eric Howe. There's been other individuals have made comments about the Aboriginal unemployment, and I mean many of my colleagues have made it very clear that we see the graduation rates. We see opportunities missed by a large, young Aboriginal population in this province. And the government of the province has to do a better job and we have to do a better job of reaching out to the Aboriginal population that's very young.

When I think about that, we talk about such a large population under the age of 20, 25. If you look at the Aboriginal population the number is unreal that's young. I think about my own family. I myself have 17 grandchildren under the age of 20. And if I look at that, it's a young Aboriginal population coming forward, wanting opportunities. We have to make sure that the education system is there for them. We have to make sure there is opportunities for post-secondary. We have to make sure that we've done all that we can do to cover the needs of our young, growing population — First Nations and Métis. And if you look at the First Nations rate of unemployment, I think it's just about

22 per cent, just about 22 per cent. That's unacceptable.

If we look at the Métis population, it's just about 11 per cent. These numbers are unacceptable when you look at the rest of the province and we talk about numbers that are 3 and 4 per cent with everyone else in the province. That is pretty sad to see these numbers, Mr. Speaker. Clearly we have a problem. And a government can sit there and speak about yes, we're willing to work. We're going to have a task force. We're going to look at the Aboriginal graduation rates. We're going to look at the education, the funding.

There are so many challenges that are facing First Nations and Métis communities when it comes to education, making sure they are cultural. There are differences — traditional ways people learned, the way the elders taught, the way a community is raised, the way parents and grandparents and communities raised the children. We need to go back. We have a lot of work to do because it is a growing population. It's huge, and there's so many of them just wanting to have a fair chance.

And I know sometimes we hear some of the criticism out there, some people, with some of the workers. That's fine. Not every worker is perfect. There is improvement we know that needs to happen. But when we look at foreign workers coming in, and the concern is if it's for . . . I guess, you have these skilled workers that can fill some of the positions, that's fine. Nobody's against that. If you can't find those workers within our province, if we're not going to give our young people a chance, if we can't have the training, we have to be clear that when you bring in foreign workers, we have to make sure that they're treated right. Just like anyone else in this province has a right to be treated when they're working.

We look at the labour legislation that this government's reviewing, Bill 85. There are many concerns about the way they've introduced this bill, the way they're bringing it forward, the way they're ramming it down Saskatchewan people. And we have families, hard-working families in this province that have truly made this province successful that it is today. And we have protection, and we see the bill being introduced, Mr. Speaker, Bill 83, to protect foreign workers.

There's other provinces that are introducing bills and, I imagine, have legislation. We need to look at that. We need to make sure we're consulting the workers, finding out how are they being treated by employers. How are they being treated by recruiters? And there's consultants, and I mean the fees, and we see some of the comments being made here about some of the fees that foreign workers are asked to pay when recruiting, I guess, companies, consultant companies that bring in foreign workers and match them up with employers.

But I think it goes further than just checking on the foreign workers and making it clear that the recruiting companies, the consultant firms . . . I think we have to make sure that there is protection, legislation that protects these workers. When an employer brings them into their place of business, we have to make sure accommodations. There are many challenges that we're hearing and some of the stuff that we're looking at and some of the concerns. And foreign workers are truly, they're in a position where they're probably very scared to raise any issues with their employer or to raise any issues with

government for that they'll be sent out or there are repercussions coming back on them. They're fearful of what the employer may do, if it's about the employer the way they're doing, about the recruiting agency, whether it's a government agency, and how they're being treated as a foreign worker. And they're scared . . . happy to come here.

We have to make sure that these protections — and we consult with them — to make sure that we deal with the issues that they're being faced. Now having said that, that's one area that we can talk about and we can work with, but this government has to be willing to go out and actually consult. And the track record of this government has been very poor when it comes to consulting anyone in our province, never mind Saskatchewan residents, but now we're talking about foreign workers, to consult foreign workers.

I don't put much trust in the Sask Party government to consult anyone, their total neglect, their stubbornness, their bullheadedness to move ahead on legislation on anything that comes to their mind and what they want to push without consulting. You know, we sometimes say it should be fair that people that are being infected by legislation that's being introduced by this government, that they should have their say. Well truly we've seen, in a lot of those situations, legislation that has been introduced by this government in the last six years, have introduced and brought forward, there has been little consultation when it comes to First Nations, Métis, protected lands. There has been a lot of different files where this government has pushed ahead with labour legislation without consulting. We've seen the courts turn down legislation that this government has to reverse and has to amend, has to fix, has to correct. Will they admit they're wrong? No, they don't like to admit they're wrong.

It just goes to show how a government gets in. And you know, yes, we've seen that there's a number of them — 49 — versus a small number in opposition. But I have to say at least there is an opposition and somebody who can stand up and show exactly what this government doesn't want people to see out there. Saskatchewan residents need to know exactly what their government is doing.

You're elected for the people by the people. That's so interesting to say that. They ask you and they trust, and they put trust in the MLAs and in government. And the Sask Party government has been handed that honour, that privilege. And we see some of the challenges and we see some of the stuff coming out in question period today, Mr. Speaker, that just goes to show you some of the relations to different bill legislations that come in about consultation.

And when you look at Bill 83, very clearly, very clearly, Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that those individuals, foreign workers, are going to have an opportunity and feel safe to share their concerns. I don't believe right now they feel that way. The legislation that's being introduced may give them some protection. How do we know? It's being introduced. We'll have to see what kind of protection is there and, in the end, what the regulations are. What are the rulings and how will it be used?

Now some of the comments in here, you know, first of all it will be about the employer, and government refers to that. They're

going to be working with the employer. It's about that side of it. That's interesting. This totally should be about the foreign worker. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear: at the end of the day, people want to come to Saskatchewan, Canada. There's a lot to offer.

And I think individuals want to make it very clear, Mr. Speaker, that they want to come to Saskatchewan, but they want to be treated fair. They want to be treated with respect. And they want to know that there's laws that protect them, that they don't have to feel that fear of being sent back. Or whether it's the recruiter, whether it's the employer, whether it's the government agency that's supposed to be protecting them, we have to do a better job. But we can see this information will come forward, and I know my colleagues will want to discuss this.

But really, when I look at the concerns . . . And I want to make it very clear. I said earlier in my comments, the foreign workers, we need them. Skilled workers, we need that. We know that. There's a lot of recruiting. Employers want to have workers. We want to support business. And I know the Aboriginal population wants to be good partners. They want to support the industries that are around their communities, whether it's First Nations, Métis communities, the Aboriginal population.

But when we see a government's lack of commitment to education, the lack of post-secondary training, and we see a government who's cut programs that at one time under the previous NDP government did really well . . . And we heard that from industry. We heard that from the Aboriginal leaders, from training institutes saying that the partnership of the Aboriginal business development program did an awesome job. It created partnerships, meaningful partnerships, and created employment.

And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government cut that program, a program that truly did some great things with partnership, with industry, with government agencies, with the training facilities. There's true partnership because there was some consultation. There was talk. They went around the table, and they developed a program that was working for the people, the Aboriginal people of this province.

[16:30]

And this government owes them a better way. They owe them a better way of consulting, a better opportunity to our young people, to my grandchildren, to all Aboriginal people. And when I talk about the Aboriginal population, because the numbers of unemployment are so high, but we don't want to forget about the 4 or 5 per cent of unemployed people. And there's young people looking for jobs — we know that — that are non-Aboriginal.

We have to make sure that all Saskatchewan residents have opportunities to post-secondary, to the best education and training opportunities that we can provide. And this government has to do a better job that's talking about filling, rather than recruiting, always recruiting. They want to go and recruit. Make sure that we're taking care of Saskatchewan people first. They used to use that, you know, first. Well let's take care of

Saskatchewan young people first, Saskatchewan people, and then if we have to go out and find skilled workers because we can't find them here, we've done all we can to educate, train, and make sure that those partnerships are working with our Aboriginal communities and all Saskatchewan residents, then yes, we encourage the recruiting and we support that. There's nothing wrong with that, bringing people, foreign workers from all over into Saskatchewan's work.

But let's make sure when they do come here we have protection to make sure that they feel protected, that they have rights just like the rest of Saskatchewan. But let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, we have an obligation to Saskatchewan residents to make sure that they have the opportunities and that it's done fair when it comes to funding for education of First Nations on-reserve as well as any other Saskatchewan resident; it's a fair process and a fair opportunity for education and a fair opportunity for training and a fair opportunity for post-secondary.

So, Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to adjourn debate. I know my colleagues have more comments on some of the bills we will be debating. And at that time, I adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 83, *The Foreign Worker Recruitment and Immigration Services Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

#### Bill No. 84

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wyant that **Bill No. 84** — *The Common Business Identifiers Act* be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to rise today and join in debate on Bill No. 84, *The Common Business Identifiers Act*. The second reading speech anyway took place December 4th, 2012, late last year.

Again referencing the second reading speech on the part of the Justice minister who introduced this piece of legislation to the Chamber, it's about "better integration and delivery of business services through more streamlined and efficient channels . . . [thereby enhancing the] environment in our province."

Continuing on with the quote, Mr. Speaker: "This bill facilitates the continued development of a future one-stop business service by establishing a . . . [service] database, or what is referred to as the hub for sharing business information."

Carrying on with the quote:

The hub allows information to be shared between Canada Revenue Agency and designated government programs to facilitate the use of the common business identifier known as the business number. The first step . . . to implement the hub were taken with the passage of amendments last

spring to the Saskatchewan business statutes to allow the exchange of information between the Canada Revenue Agency and the corporate registry.

Mr. Speaker, on the face of it, again this seems to be a fairly straightforward piece of legislation. And I guess the one thing that I would underline, just in terms of . . . by way of critique of this legislation, is the fact that, getting back to what I've quoted, ". . . the continued development of a future one-stop business service by establishing a secure database, or what is referred to as the hub for sharing business information." So that future-state quality, Mr. Speaker, is something that we'll be following with great interest.

Certainly having a single point of access or a hub approach or a unified point of access to different services and the streamlining of the way that businesses or individuals connect with or engage with government and the myriad of entities that that can entail, Mr. Speaker, that simplifying or that streamlining of connection is something that on the face of it would make good sense.

And I guess we will be interested to see how this carries through in terms of whether or not the proclaimed intent can get to that streamlining and the way that's at the same time protecting sensitive information, and that the different privacy concerns are squared off and that the database that's attached to this, how that is operated and established. You know, lots of different questions arise with a piece of legislation like this or with an initiative like this, Mr. Speaker.

But again, on the face of it the intent seems to be a laudable one. But I guess where we're interested to see how it all winds up or continues to progress, Mr. Speaker, is it seems to me there was an initiative put out for consideration by the government opposite in terms of a single access point for citizens looking to connect with government services. And you know, out of the city of Regina there was a very successful initiative with the 777-7000. You know, you phone the switchboard and they will connect you throughout government. So not just the theory of that single access point, Mr. Speaker, but as a citizen of the city of Regina who's had opportunity to use that service, for me that, I think, is very user-friendly, which is helpful when you're considering the source here, Mr. Speaker. But when the government office had mooted a similar possibility for a single access point to government services on their part, I thought, you know, that would seem to be a pretty common sense initiative, a pretty straightforward way to better connect citizens to the different services that government provided.

I'm sure you'd agree, Mr. Speaker: government is a many-splendoured thing. There's a lot of different entities that fall under the umbrella of the Government of Saskatchewan and successfully navigating those different entities to make sure that you're connecting with the service that you need or the department or the ministry that you're after, or the agency that you're seeking as a citizen, can sometimes be a bit of a daunting task. So that single point of access seemed to be a pretty common sense proposal and one that we were very interested to see how that progressed. And I guess, Mr. Speaker, that's where my caution rises in terms of the way that that initiative was announced or discussed by members opposite. And where is it today?

And I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that the hype far outstripped the reality of what is on offer. And that single point of access for citizens, as simple as a 211 or a 611 or something that gets you into the system, I think we'd do well to hear as a House where that is at. So again, the principle is good; the intention is good. It's the follow-through where we see some problems arising, Mr. Speaker.

But as regards the specific piece of legislation in front of us, with using a common business identifier, as in using that hub approach to ensure that you've got that uniform or that unified common access point, and that you've not got businesses forced to endure the merry-go-round or the tarantella of, you know, from going from ministry to ministry or department to department, again we think that's a laudable goal. But it's with the follow-through and with the execution of what is proposed here in this draft piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, that we'll be watching closely to see how that stated intent measures up to the actual delivery.

Now I know that other members are interested to join in debate on other pieces of legislation. So I at this time will commence ceding the floor on Bill No. 84, *The Common Business Identifiers Act*, and as such, Mr. Speaker, I'd move to adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — The member has moved adjournment of debate of Bill No. 84, *The Common Business Identifiers Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

### Bill No. 85

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 85** — *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* be now read a second time.]

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to wade into the debate on Bill No. 85, *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*. Obviously since this Bill came to the House in December, the opposition has much to say about this, as do many members of the general public. This Bill isn't just about unionized workplaces. This is about all workers in Saskatchewan and will have a tremendous impact on all workers here in Saskatchewan.

I think one thing that I want to talk about, Mr. Speaker, is the consultation. So less than a year ago, Mr. Speaker, last I believe it was May, the government announced that they were making major changes. A hundred years of labour legislation they were going to consult on in 90 days, beginning in May and wrapping up at the end of July. So 90 days of what they called consultations which would . . . But they would only be taking written submissions.

I want to talk a little bit about this government's record on consultation in the first place. They tend to do things after the

fact. They will produce something, provide it, and then they get pushback or kickback and then decide that they need to walk it backwards. And then they'll start listening, Mr. Speaker. But the fact is, in order to create good public policy, you need to be talking to people before you are proposing things, Mr. Speaker.

So there were 90 days over the course of the summer. So not only was it only 90 days to review 100 years of labour legislation, but those days happened over the summer days here in Saskatchewan, which as we know, the summer, it's not that people stop working in the summer, but the reality is many people like to take advantage of the short summer that we have, and June and July I suspect are probably not the most convenient or easy ways for people to participate in putting together briefs.

But I want to talk about something, some consultation that was very good on a very similar issue. Back in 2005 the federal government decided that they were going to review the federal labour standards Act. So the federal labour standards Act only governs about 10 per cent of employees here in Canada. The employees it covers are interprovincial, who work in interprovincial and international trade, those who work in banking, telecommunications, federal Crown corporations, and some who are involved with some First Nations activity.

So the government decides that they're going to review the federal labour standards. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? Do you know what they did? In February of 2005 the federal government, the then federal government struck a commission, a fairly high-level commission too. Judge Harry Arthurs chaired that commission. A Daphne Taras who used to be at the U of C [University of Calgary] who is now the dean I believe of commerce at the U of S was on that commission, and two others. It was a very high-level commission to look at the issue of federal labour standards, Mr. Speaker.

So they strike this high-level committee. This is the federal government in 2005. They put out a consultation paper in February of 2005. They put out a consultation page in February of 2005. They produced a interim report in October of 2005. And the final report, the final report did not come out until October of 2006, the final report. So that is a considerably greater length of time than 90 days, Mr. Speaker, 90 days this government took to review our provincial labour laws.

So the same process, they called it the modernizing. The federal government back in 2005 also called it the modernization of federal labour laws. But they started consulting in February of 2005 and didn't produce their final report until October of 2006, a considerably greater length of time than the May until the end of July period that this government took to take 100 years of labour legislation and review it and roll it into one omnibus bill, Mr. Speaker, which I think is a huge problem.

Let me tell you a little bit more about that process that produced a really great book full of principles and ideas, Mr. Speaker. It's called *Fairness at Work: Federal Labour Standards for the 21st Century*. So this is what came out of that consultation process.

[16:45]

So what did they do? So this provincial government, this Sask

Party government accepted written proposals, Mr. Speaker. What did this federal labour standards review do? There were 13 locations, Mr. Speaker, 13 locations across Canada. Let me tell you where they held their consultations: Whitehorse, Ottawa, Toronto, Regina, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Montreal, Moncton, Charlottetown, Halifax, and St. John's. So the federal government did in-person consultations. They allowed for people to come and present briefs.

So what happened here in Saskatchewan? What kind of briefs did we hear in Saskatchewan? So some of the participants, they weren't just labour organizations, Mr. Deputy Speaker. These were all people concerned about labour standards and the average, everyday employee here in Saskatchewan. So some of the presenters: actually SaskTel presented. The Work and Family Unit presented. The Breastfeeding Committee for Canada presented. The Balancing Work and Family Alliance presented. The Saskatoon caregiver information centre participated. An organization called Saskatoon Communities for Children and the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce participated and provided in-person briefs to this high-level commission, Mr. Speaker.

So when we want to talk consultation here, accepting written submissions and willing to add just form letters to the consultation process I don't think accounts for successful or effective and meaningful consultation, Mr. Speaker. So there were these 13 locations across Canada where the federal government accepted briefs in person, plus they had many, many, many written submissions as well.

And I want to emphasise, I want to emphasise the timeline here. Our Sask Party government last May announces that we're going to be consulting, 90 days of consultations, only accepting written submissions, till the end of July, Mr. Speaker. I think that that's hugely problematic when you're reviewing 100 years of labour legislation that impacts all employers here in this province. It's a huge problem.

One of the things about which I'm very passionate is the issue of work-family balance and being able to help ensure that people are able to maintain their care responsibilities and their work responsibilities and do both as well and effectively as possible, Mr. Speaker. And I think one of the things that jumps out on me, this is one of the changes. And I actually have some questions for the minister, and maybe at some point he could answer this question. But if you look at the side-by-side comparisons of *The Labour Standards Act*, the existing legislation here right now, just a little tiny change, but it'll make a big difference in lots of people's lives, and it will be problematic. So this is the current legislation that is in effect here in Saskatchewan:

Notwithstanding subsection (1), where there are more than 10 employees in any establishment, the employer shall grant to every employee who is usually employed for 20 hours or more in a week a rest period of two consecutive days in every seven days, and one of those days is to be Sunday wherever possible.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's existing legislation. What is this government doing today with *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*? I would like to read that:

In prescribed workplaces with more than 10 employees, or for prescribed categories of employees, an employer shall grant to employees in the workplace or to the category of employees two consecutive days off every week.

You might notice in that second piece it isn't something that might jump out at you, but the word Sunday is missing, Mr. Speaker. So no longer in workplaces with more than 10 employees will Sunday be the day off that many of us get. The reality is when it comes to work-family balance, if it's around children — if it's around elders, it might be a different case — but if it's around children, the reality is children for 10 months of the year are in school, Monday through Friday. And so if you don't have an opportunity to have one of the days off where your children are also off school, you're making it even more difficult, Mr. Speaker, to find any balance in your life. And the interesting thing . . .

And this is my question for the minister. So that's for workplaces that have over more than 10 employees. What I'm curious about is, and he can let me know this, but what I understand is that if you are under 10 employees, Bill 85 only requires an employer to grant one day off every week to an employee who usually works or is at the disposal of the employer for 20 hours or more in a week. So am I correct in saying that employees will no longer be entitled to two days off in a week?

So I'm not sure. I think we have many questions about this Act. We're not sure where the rubber hits the road, what this is going to look like. But I'd like to know from the minister, am I correct in reading that? To grant one day off every week to an employee who usually works or is at the disposal of the employer for 20 hours or more in a week, is that correct? That you will only be entitled to one day off in a week, Mr. Speaker? That's hugely problematic.

Some of the employees that I've had the privilege of working . . . happen to be more vulnerable employees working in places that aren't unionized. They're not professional employees, but they're front-line employees who have a huge impact on business. They are the people who work in restaurants. They're the front line in confectionary stores. They're the receptionists or the people who we meet when we go into a business who work very hard and set the stage for the business. If that . . . They're the first person you meet when you walk in the door. So we need to be able to ensure that our . . . What my experience is, is many of these employees have not been, don't have the protection of labour standards and don't have, for example, paid time off, whether it's paid sick time or paid days to care for family members.

Work-family balance is a very real issue for a huge percentage of people. We have about 70 per cent of people, of mothers with children under the age of five, who are in the paid workforce right now. About 70 per cent of those with children under five are in the paid workforce, so that's a huge percentage of our population that we need to make sure working conditions are good. And I would argue that one day a week, having one day a week off is not conducive to work-family balance.

The reality is there are many employees who are working multiple jobs when it comes to scheduling shifts. When I say

multiple jobs, I'm talking two or three jobs where they're trying just to make ends meet. And so they are working jobs where they are precariously juggling while . . . when does this shift finish? They might not have regularly scheduled hours as it is. So the reality is, it is incredibly tough for a lot of people out there, here in Saskatchewan, and ensuring the people only have one day off is not satisfactory, Mr. Speaker. That is a huge problem.

Another issue is around averaging of hours when it comes to flexibility. And I'm a huge proponent of flexibility in the workplace. Again from a work-family balance perspective, there's all kinds of literature that shows that when employees are able to maintain their work-family balance, that you have lower absenteeism costs. You have higher loyalty. You have lower recruitment and retention costs because people aren't leaving because they're not just trying to hold it together every day. So supporting employees in work-family balance, individual employers do it, but our labour standards also set the minimum bar for that. And taking away a day is not a good thing to do.

But I'd like to talk a little bit about averaging of hours and, well, flexibility. I could talk a great deal about flexibility. I'm a little bit all over the map here.

I feel very passionately about supporting people in their working and caring responsibilities. And we have huge concerns about this bill and what this bill will do to the average everyday person, let alone some of the more vulnerable individuals who are working their butts off to try to be good, productive citizens but just are not given a break. And there are things in this Act that will in fact take them a step backwards, Mr. Speaker.

So one thing that we have here in Saskatchewan right now is something called averaging of hours, where if you want someone to work more than eight hours a day in a certain period of time you have to get permission from labour standards to be able to work more than those hours. And as I said, I'm a big believer in flexible work and thinking about the different ways. For some people working a compressed work week is a good thing, but it's only a good thing if it works for you. So to be mandated to have to work a 10-hour day, four days a week, is not about flexibility, Mr. Speaker. So right now, as I said, with averaging of hours, that's something that you negotiate with your employer and you get permission from the labour standards to be able to do that.

But this Act, and maybe the minister can correct me if I'm wrong, but in looking at this Act, what it is telling us is that an employer will not have to get permission anymore and you could be mandated to work 10-hour days, four days a week. Which again, I want to emphasize, flexibility is what is key to supporting work-family balance, working with an employer and employee to come up with a relationship that works and ensures that it works well for both parties.

So when you take away the averaging of hours and are mandating that you have to work a 10-hour work day, it's hugely problematic. I've worked with people who have been forced to work split shifts, so they work for a few hours in the morning and have to come back later on in the day. These are

people who often have transportation issues. They may have their work in one location, their child care in another, no vehicle to get anywhere, so something like this makes it incredibly difficult, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for people to live the life that I think we all want people to live. We want people to have the opportunity to have fulfilling work and to be able to be good caregivers for their children or their elders.

And there are things in this new Saskatchewan employment Act that are going to make it very difficult for people to lead balanced lives where they're thinking about, where they are really able to have some balance in their lives and care for their children or their elders well. So getting rid of and cutting away overtime pay is a problem as well, and forcing people to bank their hours. Is that what the bill is going to do, Mr. Speaker? Looking at it, that is what it appears to be doing. So putting all the flexibility in the employer's court and taking any flexibility or option away from the employee, especially some of the more vulnerable employees who do some of the averaging of hours, is hugely problematic.

So just to recap here a little bit, I want to talk about consultation. That's a big piece that I had focused on. We had the government, the federal government in 2005 embark upon a real and meaningful consultation process that took from February of 2005 until October of 2006 to do the same thing that this government did in 90 days, Mr. Speaker. And this government did not even meet with anybody face to face. How do you have a real consultation process if you can't even sit down and ask questions of the person who is providing you with a document, Mr. Speaker? How do you have any give and take and dig deep and learn what the person or the organization is proposing?

So I think, Mr. Speaker, this consultation process has led to a document that is weak and will have some serious problems for Saskatchewan citizens. I know I have colleagues who will be speaking in greater detail about this, but with that, I would like to move to adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 85, *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — It now being near the hour of 5 o'clock, this House stands recessed to 7 p.m. this evening.

[The Assembly recessed from 17:00 until 19:00.]

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