



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

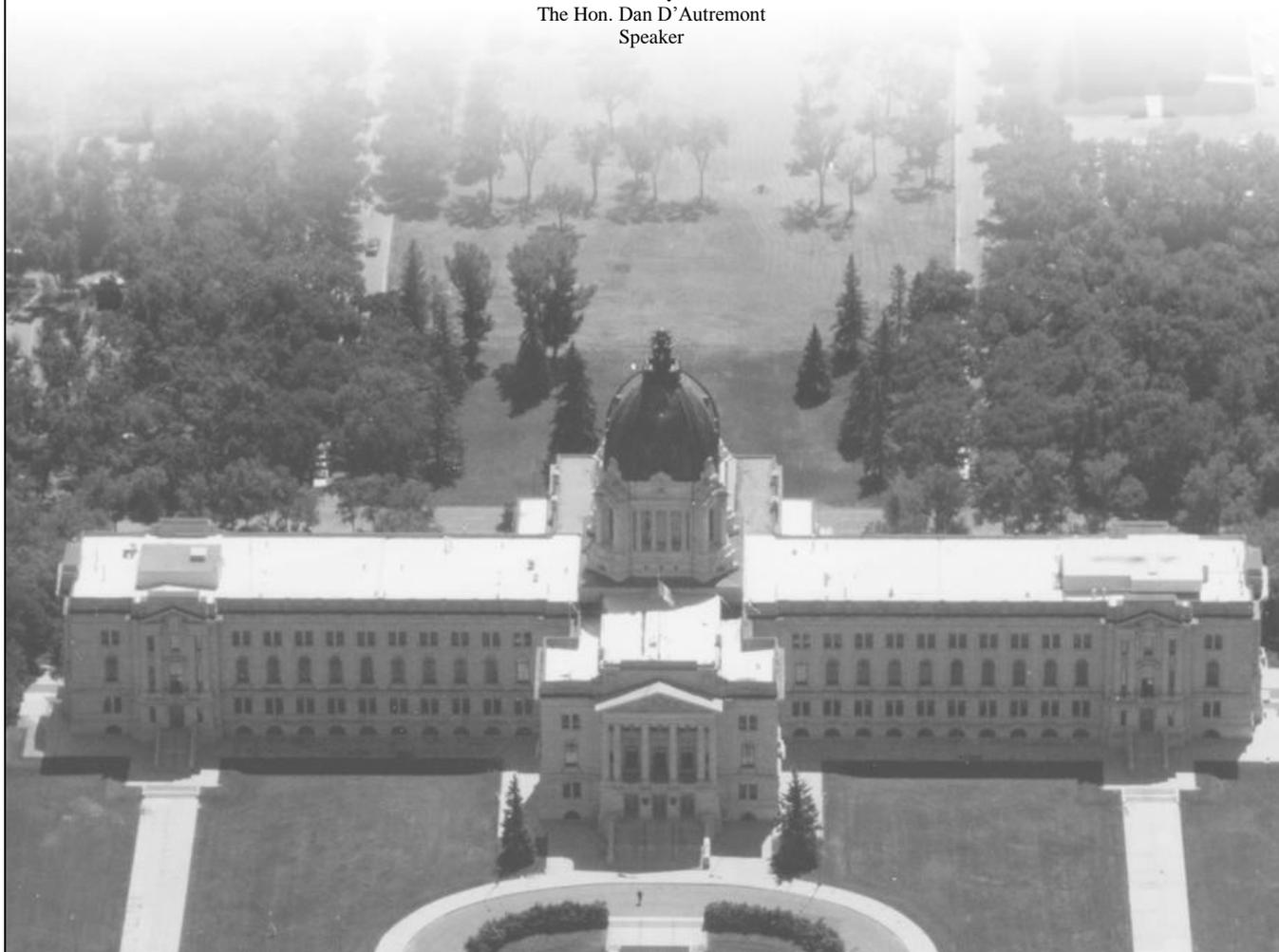
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Dan D'Autremont
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Dan D’Autremont
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Cam Broten

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Broten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Campeau, Jennifer	SP	Saskatoon Fairview
Chartier, Danielle	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Cox, Herb	SP	The Battlefords
D’Autremont, Hon. Dan	SP	Cannington
Docherty, Mark	SP	Regina Coronation Park
Doherty, Hon. Kevin	SP	Regina Northeast
Doke, Larry	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Hon. Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Hon. Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harrison, 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]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, I want to introduce 15 grade 11 and 12 students from the Bert Fox Community School from Fort Qu'Appelle, the beautiful community of Fort Qu'Appelle. Hello there. They are, as I said, 15 grade 11 and 12 students that are taking law 30 and social 30 classes. They're accompanied by their teachers Valerie Brooks, Cory Cochrane, and Melanie Black.

I will have the opportunity to talk to them or visit with them, get a picture taken, and then visit with them after. I would hope that the question period is quite a bit like it was yesterday so the explanations of what actually goes on in question period is much easier because it was a very quiet day in the House yesterday. Anyway I'd like all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Marchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce some very special guests that we have in the gallery today from the Canadian Red Cross Day of Pink celebrations that are taking place.

From the Red Cross, Mr. Speaker, we have Rebecca Benko, thank you; Donna Brewster, RespectED assistant coordinator, thank you; and Diane Francoeur, a RespectED coordinator. And along with them, Mr. Speaker, from Wilfred Hunt School in Regina, April Howard and her grade 8 class. Give us a wave. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, as well the best place to start with preventing bullying is through the education and empowering our students, Mr. Speaker. And so I want to thank this group for all the work that they've done on bullying prevention in our province. And I'd like all members of the Assembly to help me welcome all of them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join, on behalf of the members of the opposition, I'd like to join the Minister of Education welcoming the folks from Red Cross and the work they've done on Day of Pink, and highlighting how important this issue is for all of us, but particularly young people in our schools. And the role of the ministry is really important and the role of the Red Cross is huge in that leadership. So thank you very much from all of us in opposition and all of us in this House today. Thank you.

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

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce through you and to members of the Assembly and welcome them here today, there are 19 public service employees seated in the Speaker's gallery. They are participating in the parliamentary program for the public service. The ministries that are represented today include Advanced Ed, Agriculture, Economy, Education, Health, Highways, Justice, Provincial Capital Commission, Public Service Commission, and Legislative Assembly Service, which I think covers off almost every ministry.

I'm not sure if they've already done it, but they'll be doing a tour of the building and also getting briefings from various branches within the building: library, Legislative Assembly, committees branch, Executive Council — that sort of thing. And it's my pleasure to be able to meet with them after question period today to give them a bit of insight about what it's like to be a minister and what we do. And, Mr. Speaker, we know as ministers that we can't do our job without the public service, so I want to publicly thank them for all the work that they do and ask all members to welcome them to their Assembly today.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure on behalf of the official opposition to join with the minister in welcoming all the members of the civil service here today. We all know that professional public servants are the core of good governance. And Saskatchewan has a long history of professional public service, dating back to the 1940s where we both imported our systems and our civil servants to other parts of Canada. And I know that you keep, you carry on that tradition.

So thank you for all that you do. And I look forward to, after the minister speaks to you, having the opportunity to chat a little bit about the role of an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] in the official opposition. So I look forward to that and ask all members to join with us in welcoming these folks to your legislature.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In addition to joining in the welcome of folks from the Red Cross and all of those young people who are joining in anti-bullying day by wearing pink, I'd also like to acknowledge and introduce to you a couple from Swift Current, constituents of mine and friends of mine. Myles and Cindy Penner, I see, have joined the group there in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Speaker. And they're great contributors to the city of Swift Current, and I just wanted to take the opportunity to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly today.

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

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce in your gallery a good friend of mine. His name is Quinn Moerike. He's one of our people that has gone away to

Alberta for school, and I am trying very hard to convince him and his family to come back to our province and join his family that's trickling back one by one that left the province years ago. And I'd like to introduce him to the Assembly, and hopefully it will soon be his Assembly. Thank you.

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

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with my colleagues in welcoming the members of the public service, also in particular two of my old colleagues in immigration settlement, Tim Helfrich and Elizabeth Fix. We had the absolute pleasure of performing and finishing 44 orders in council in one year on behalf of the ministry. So we've done an awful lot of work, and I'd really like to get all members to help join me in welcoming them to their Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased today to stand up and present a petition in reference to cellphone coverage for northwestern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. The prayer reads as follows:

To undertake, as soon as possible, to ensure that SaskTel delivers cell service to the Canoe Lake First Nations, along with the adjoining communities of Cole Bay and Jans Bay; Buffalo River First 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, and the hamlet of Patuanak; and Birch Narrows First Nations along with the community of Turnor Lake, including all the neighbouring communities in each of these areas.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition have come from all throughout Saskatchewan. And on this particular petition, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed it are primarily from Turnor Lake. And I so present.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition today calling for the reconsideration of passing Bill 85, *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*. And since the employment Act was introduced in December, literally hundreds of hours of study and comparison have been carried out in the interest of due diligence. And if this bill does become the new consolidation of labour laws in Saskatchewan, working people, especially young workers, immigrant workers, and other vulnerable workers will suffer from a hasty watering down of our current labour standards which set the mandatory minimums for all Saskatchewan workers. I'd 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.

I do so present. Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Red Cross Day of Pink

Ms. Campeau: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in the House today to recognize our government's continued commitment to anti-bullying in Saskatchewan. Yesterday I attended the Red Cross Day of Pink student rally with over 1,000 young people at the Turvey Centre. The Minister of Education has proclaimed April 10th to be Canadian Red Cross Day of Pink. Today, Mr. Speaker, the Red Cross along with SaskEnergy invited schools and businesses across the province to wear pink to help raise awareness about the impacts of bullying on children and youth. This initiative provides students, staff, and the larger community with the opportunity to discuss the impact of bullying and to learn how they can assist in creating safe and respectful environments for everyone in the community.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I support Day of Pink by wearing pink to raise awareness about the impacts of bullying on children and youth. And I'm eager to support the work of the Minister of Education and the ministry in my new role as Legislative Secretary. I look forward to travelling the province and engaging communities in public consultations to discuss anti-bullying initiatives and strategies. We believe that all students have the right to a caring, respectful, and safe environment where bullying is not tolerated.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage this Assembly to join me in showing support for this initiative by wearing pink and by participating and supporting anti-bullying events in their constituencies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Apology

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in members' statements, it was brought to my attention by the member from Sutherland about the inappropriate use of social media by a staff member and, Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize for that. And I thank the member for bringing it to my attention, and I hope members will accept that apology for what took place.

And it's a good reminder, Mr. Speaker, I think for all of us in this building, whether we're a staff member doing research, whether we're an MLA doing a member's statement, or whether we're a political party doing an ad, is that we all have a choice to make. We can either be part of improving and elevating the political discourse in the province, or we can be part of a race to the bottom.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, very clearly, that under my leadership, the NDP [New Democratic Party] is committed to positive and constructive politics here in the province, and we look forward to doing that in the years to come. So I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to make this apology. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Corrections and Policing.

Skate4Smiles Fundraiser

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to tell all members about a successful fundraising event done in White City. This year Skate4Smiles raised \$66,000. Skate4Smiles is a fun, family-oriented skate-a-thon held in memory of Dawson Ellert. The Ellert family hosts this event to raise funds and awareness for the Children's Hospital Foundation of Saskatchewan and to honour Dawson, who loved to skate.

In early 2010 Dawson was diagnosed with a brain tumour. The surgery to remove it seemed to be a great success, but he suffered a massive stroke during recovery that ultimately claimed his life. He died on February 15th, 2010 at eight years old.

Dawson's hospital stay was a frightening experience. Children have different fears than we do as adults. They still need to be happy. They need to play. They need to have their parents near. They need to feel comfortable, and they need to feel safe. The new Children's Hospital will address these issues. It will provide for a stay that's as comfortable as possible for both the child and the parents.

Through the continued effort of the Ellert family, the Government of Saskatchewan, the generous sponsors and many participants, and of course to all those who donate, we are one step closer to a children's hospital right here in Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Red Cross Day of Pink

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to stand in support of youth across Canada who are participating in the Red Cross Day of Pink. Red Cross Day of Pink is a day to stand in solidarity with youth who are experiencing homophobic or transphobic bullying in their schools and communities. It's a day to say that we will not tolerate violence in our communities. And most importantly, Mr. Speaker, the Day of Pink is a day for expressing kindness, compassion, and courage.

It is expected that 20,000 youth across Saskatchewan will be participating in the Red Cross Day of Pink today. The youth are asking us to follow their lead. And this means that we must also participate in the Day of Pink not just by putting on a pink shirt or a tie, but by committing to addressing bullying when we see it at work, at community events, or in activities that we participate in with our kids. It is up to all of us to create communities that are safe for LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender] youth.

Mr. Speaker, bullying is a complex issue and youth are demanding that we help provide solutions. We must listen to our youth leaders in our communities and the solutions they are offering, and we must adequately fund anti-bullying workshops and programs for youth and adults. And all of us must take the time to educate ourselves about the issues that LGBT youth are facing in our communities. Most of all, Mr. Speaker, we must show compassion.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my fellow members of the House join with me in standing up for our youth and join with them in addressing bullying and discrimination in Saskatchewan on today's Red Cross Day of Pink, and every day. Thank you.

[13:45]

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

Saskatoon Contacts Win Western Regional Championship

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise in the Assembly today to recognize the Saskatoon Contacts hockey team, who won the Midget AAA Western Regional Championship this past weekend. To get to the regionals, the Contacts played the P.A. [Prince Albert] Mintos in a nail-biting series, with the Contacts winning the provincial title three games to two. Mr. Speaker, the regional tournament took place in Kenora, Ontario where the winner advances to the national championship in Sault Ste. Marie being held April 22nd to the 28th.

On Saturday, the Contacts scored three first-period goals to finish with a 4-1 win over Winnipeg Wild. The Contacts' goalie Rylan Parenteau made 30 saves for Saskatoon's win. Mr. Speaker, the Contacts finished the round robin portion of the tournament with a 2 to 1 record. On Sunday, the Contacts trumped the Thunder Bay Kings for a 3 to 0 win, which secured them the regional champion title. Vukie Mpofu scored a first period goal, and Cameron Hebig racked up a point on the power play 36 seconds into the second period to help secure the win.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Riversdale and I are seldom on the same page about issues in the Assembly, but in this case we are. The member's brother, Marc Chartier, is a coach of the Contacts and my grandson, Terrell Draude, is number 7 on the team. I guess in some places politics doesn't matter.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of the Assembly join me and the member from Riversdale in congratulating the Saskatoon Contacts on their Western Regional Championship and wish them all the best of luck in the nationals in Sault Ste. Marie. Go Contacts.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Briercrest College and Seminary Receives Degree-Granting Authority

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday morning I had the pleasure of attending a ceremony with the Premier and Minister of Advanced Education at Briercrest College and Seminary in Carleton Place where the Premier announced that Briercrest had been authorized to grant a

Bachelor of Arts and Humanities effective July 2013.

After *The Degree Authorization Act* and regulations came into force last fall, Briercrest's application was the first to be considered for degree granting by the newly created Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board. As a result, Briercrest becomes the first Saskatchewan post-secondary institution outside of the University of Saskatchewan and University of Regina to be able to grant degrees other than theological degrees in the history of our province.

Today marks a new era in post-secondary education, one with expanded choice for our students and one that recognizes the quality of our students. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to offer my sincere congratulations to Briercrest on this great accomplishment. Yesterday's announcement is clearly a reflection of the hard work, dedication, and commitment to quality education they have demonstrated for the past 74 years, and I was honoured to celebrate with them yesterday. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Prince Albert Carlton.

Samuel McLeod Business Awards

Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise in the House today to recognize a wonderful event I was able to attend last night in Prince Albert, along with the member from Prince Albert Northcote. We had the great opportunity of attending the Prince Albert Chamber of Commerce Samuel McLeod Business Awards. These awards, which are named after one of Prince Albert's early settlers and entrepreneurs, recognize outstanding businesses in Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the recipients and their respective awards today: Prince Albert Ice Hawks for community involvement, the Royal Bank of Canada for investment, Mark-It Signs in the marketing category, Prince Albert Brewing Co. for new product or service, G & P Plumbing & Heating for new venture, Granite DKC for Service Award, Centennial of Flight for tourism, Graham Hodges of Mark-It Signs for Young Entrepreneur, and the prestigious Business of the Year Award went to Prince Albert Brewing Company. Additionally, the Business Legacy Award winner was Mr. Leo Fontaine who was formally recognized at an awards brunch.

I would also like to recognize the event sponsors who made the event possible: *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, PotashCorp, SaskEnergy, Saskatchewan Research Council, CIBC [Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce], and Advantage Credit Union.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating all of the worthy businesses and the recipients today whose entrepreneurial spirit greatly contributes to this province. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Combatting Discrimination and Bullying

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we have already discussed today through member statements, today is known as the Day of Pink and it's the international day against bullying, discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia.

One of the first things I did, Mr. Speaker, after becoming the Leader of the Opposition, is to appoint the member from Saskatoon Centre as our new critic for diversity, equality, and human rights. I made this critic appointment, Mr. Speaker, because I think we have so much more to do in this province when it comes to fighting discrimination, promoting equality and, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party has not been doing enough on these fronts. So my question to the Premier on the Day of Pink is this: what specific steps has he taken to eliminate discrimination, make all forms of bullying unacceptable in our schools, and fight homophobia and transphobia in our society?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question today. Mr. Speaker, this is a very important day, not just for the people of the province but, you know, far beyond our borders. Mr. Speaker, we wear pink today to remind all of us of the importance of anti-bullying, the importance of preservation and the protection of rights for all.

Mr. Speaker, we need to go beyond wearing a certain colour on a certain day of the year. Mr. Speaker, certainly this government takes the issue very seriously. In a recent announcement in the appointment of Legislative Secretary duties for the government caucus, we've asked the member for Saskatoon Fairview to make a special focus, a special point of this very issue, working not just with the Ministry of Education but other ministries in government as to how we can, frankly, have better policies, better protections, the likes of which have been referred by the Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, we look forward to her good work as well as the continued efforts of the public service and the various ministries involved in this particular issue.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm glad that the Premier is talking about specific actions that can be taken. We've had a focus as an opposition, Mr. Speaker, on the need for a mandate of zero tolerance on any incidents of queer bashing or other related harassment and discrimination in our schools.

And when we look at what specific steps can be taken in our schools, Mr. Speaker, one avenue in order to help students are gay-straight alliances. We believe it's a common sense approach, Mr. Speaker, that could help combat bullying and ensure that our schools are safe and welcoming for all children. If students and teachers and allies want to get together, Mr. Speaker, in order to form these clubs, we think that's a good thing.

So my question to the Premier is: what is the Sask Party's position on gay-straight alliances? Do they support them in our schools? And if the Sask Party government does support

gay-straight alliances in our schools, what steps is the government taking to promote the establishment of these clubs?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, these clubs can be formed in schools today in the province of Saskatchewan. I don't think the Government of Saskatchewan would stand in the way of that happening. I would say this as well, Mr. Speaker, that the work that we're going to be receiving from the member for Fairview, the member who's been tasked as the Legislative Secretary specifically on the issue of anti-bullying, I'm sure will touch on this and touch on a number of other important issues.

Mr. Speaker, members of this House will know that the Ministry of Education has an anti-bullying initiative today. School boards, school divisions in the province, are undertaking their own program. I noted today on social media that even the town of Eston is, as a community, as a municipality, is passing its own bylaw with respect to bullying. So, Mr. Speaker, there is more work to be done in the file. That's why we've tasked someone specifically to do this very thing within government, Mr. Speaker. And there's a track record there.

We also asked this very same member to focus more on the involvement of women in boards of Crown corporations. I'm happy to report to the House the work was done. A very excellent list of women who are interested and more than qualified to serve on boards was submitted and the appointments have already begun. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good when cities and towns and when school divisions show leadership, Mr. Speaker, for the establishment of such clubs and the extension of safe places for children who may be vulnerable to bullying. That's a good thing. But the provincial government and the provincial ministry could be showing much more leadership on this front.

One thing, Mr. Speaker, that the ministry could be doing is providing information on their website, able to access in an easy manner, that could provide information about these clubs, the benefits, how students or teachers could go about establishing these clubs, Mr. Speaker. And we've seen stronger leadership from other provinces where this information has been available, where there have been more targeted efforts to reduce bullying and ensure that all children have a safe and welcoming place to go when it comes to school.

So my question to the Premier is this: will the Sask Party government commit to providing, on the ministry's website, additional information so that when there are students, teachers, allies, who are interested in establishing a GSA [gay-straight alliance], they are able to access the information that they need and not simply rely on what might be occurring through a school division or what might not be occurring through a school division? Will they commit to that today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think the

government would preclude anything. I think we want to let the member from Fairview do her work, let the ministries do their work. We're happy to take advice and counsel from the Leader of the Opposition, from members opposite.

There are some other issues in provinces that we've noted and I think we need to explore those issues with respect to the alliances. And I think specifically of religious schools that are operating in the province today, not just Christian schools. We have to be concerned, and I hope the member is concerned about the protection of freedom of religion as well. Mr. Speaker, that's very much a part of the sentiment that we support, expressed today in the House.

So there are a number of issues. The work is going to be done by the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Education, in conjunction with the ministries that are involved, Mr. Speaker. And I expect, as we've seen in the past from this member from Fairview, an excellent report and good work and we're open certainly to the advice and counsel that might come from members opposite.

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

SaskPower Finances and Infrastructure

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in today's SaskPower annual report, the government promised it won't take any more dividends from SaskPower because the corporation is now strapped for cash. In fact the debt/equity ratio for SaskPower is already 63.8 per cent and it's projected to grow to an extreme high of 71.3 per cent this year.

The public has heard this story before, only to see SaskPower have its assets stripped of \$120 million to shore up the books of the province. The government still ran a deficit, Mr. Speaker, according to public accounts, and then increased people's power bills by 5 per cent. Nevertheless the report says there will be no dividend this year.

What assurance does the public have that SaskPower and the Sask Party government have their books in order so that power prices won't go up to pay for the Sask Party's budget blunders?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. The question around the \$120 million dividend that the member references is as a result of the year that we had very significant flooding in our province. While we had significant flooding, there was also the unanticipated benefit of a lot of water in our dam systems that we were able to generate much, much more hydroelectricity as a result of that. So we felt as a government that while SaskPower benefited from that and we were in a position where we had significant flooding, it was appropriate to move \$120 million to support the efforts in flooding.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The SaskPower

report also shows that the projected capital costs are \$10 billion to replace aging infrastructure and bring on new generation capacity. What it doesn't say is how the province is going to pay for those \$10 billion. And judging from past behaviour, it will be Saskatchewan industry and people who pay this new \$10 billion bill through increases in their power rates.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government should use this annual report as an opportunity to be straight with the public. Releasing a projection of future rates is the transparent thing to do. Who will be paying for the 10 billion in new capital costs for SaskPower, and what will be the future rate increases for people and businesses?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, if you listen to the NDP, you would be of the view that they never ever took a dividend from SaskPower, never ever did it according to that member, if you listen to her. The fact of the matter is they took dividends year after year after year: \$35 million in 1993, 100 per cent of earnings from SaskPower; in 1998, \$200 million, 114 per cent of the dividend; and in 2001 — and we can go down the list — 181 per cent of the profits of SaskPower.

Mr. Speaker, SaskPower is indeed investing very significantly into our infrastructure network — \$981 million. There are \$226 million dedicated just for the growth of this province, for new customers alone here in Saskatchewan, because of the unprecedented growth in our province.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just wish the minister would pay as much attention to his debt to equity ratio, which is going upwards under his watch.

Mr. Speaker, SaskPower's annual report reveals that the Sask Party has a long ways to go to modernize our energy grid, not only on the fiscal side, but also on the supply side. The report shows wind power makes up only 5 per cent of the province's grid compared to coal at 41 per cent. New wind projects won't be fully online until 2016.

Mr. Speaker, our province's emissions are growing every year and coal-fired generation is one of the leading causes of those emissions' growth. That's why, in the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies final report of April 2010, there are clear recommendations from this legislature to add new renewable power generation wherever possible. Mr. Speaker, that report is now three years old. The growth in renewable energy has been stagnant. Why has the Sask Party government moved so slowly at bringing on new, renewable power generation to the province?

[14:00]

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the premise of the member's question is completely incorrect. We have just finished completing the construction of a

177-megawatt wind project near Chaplin, Saskatchewan. Just finished completing it; it's coming on stream right away here. We would invite the member to come out to Chaplin and take a look at the facility out there to verify that it actually exists, if you don't believe that it does.

Mr. Speaker, there are a whole host of projects that SaskPower is involved in. In terms of clean coal, we're investing over \$1.2 billion down in the southeast part of our province to address the concerns about CO₂ emissions. It will have with it the added benefit, obviously, of enhanced oil recovery — a very, very good project for our province. And indeed we're seeing countries from all over the world sending people to Saskatchewan to take a look at that very cutting- and leading-edge project down in the southeast part of our province.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The annual report shows peak demand is expected to increase 2.9 per cent this year. Clearly energy conservation, the most affordable option in terms of grid capacity, isn't being utilized at the level it needs to be. Mr. Speaker, the power grid of tomorrow needs to be clean and efficient. And the most affordable way to do this is through energy conservation. In fact, conservative estimates back in 2010 showed SaskPower had at least 100 megawatts of conservation to find, and they haven't even met half of that, Mr. Speaker.

Everyone knows energy conservation is the most affordable choice for consumers, for businesses, for SaskPower, and for the province. Why does the Sask Party government stall on energy conservation as the most common sense, affordable way to renew our power grid?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, SaskPower has an enviable record with respect to environmental initiatives that they have taken. And that's precisely the reason why they just were awarded the Canadian Electricity Association's Environmental Commitment Award.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to it in our administration. Clearly SaskPower is moving forward with respect to this. In terms of investment in our province, under the NDP over the last 10 years that they were in government, there was a commitment of \$3.2 billion for infrastructure from SaskPower. We have now over \$10 billion of investment scheduled over the next 10 years in our province for infrastructure, renewable projects under SaskPower.

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

IPAC-CO₂

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday we raised a Provincial Auditor's report that we've just recently obtained, one though that was sent almost three years ago to the Minister of Finance and to the former minister for Advanced Education as it relates to the Sask Party government's IPAC [International Performance Assessment Centre for geologic

storage of CO₂] affair.

It highlighted millions of taxpayers' dollars that have flowed, that were at risk at that very time and continued to flow. And that government knew there was problems at that point in time, or at least they should have, because they had three board members on the board in November of 2009 when it was reported to them.

It's clear that no action was taken by that government to protect taxpayers' dollars from waste, yet that minister continued to make even more claims on Monday suggesting her government had acted, something that the facts and timeline entirely refute. Why is that government so intent on making more baseless claims, pretending to have acted instead of providing the straight answers and real accountability taxpayers deserve over their wasted dollars?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm so pleased that the member got up today to reference questions he asked in the past, because he referred to a memo. And I understand that the member opposite gets quite confused when it comes to this particular file, but there is a difference between a memo to someone and a letter. And what he calls a memo to government ministers is actually a letter that was written by the Provincial Auditor. Oh, Mr. Speaker, what a surprise. Who was that letter to? Well, Mr. Speaker, it was to the board of governors at the University of Regina.

The Minister of Post-Secondary Education quite logically was cc'd [carbon copy] as well as the Minister of Finance. So a cc to a letter does not a memo make. However I understand that perhaps the member opposite is confused. Also that particular Provincial Auditor . . . I'm looking forward to the next question, Mr. Speaker, so I can explain when he knew about the Provincial Auditor's report and when we put that report into records.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, again we see here today, that minister simply has no credibility on this file. That minister had members on the board from the very get-go. The Minister of Energy and Resources funded the very start-up of CVI [Climate Ventures Inc.] and that minister flowed money that she was responsible for and had people reporting directly back to them. Because they didn't act . . . [inaudible] . . . I suspect we have a report that's gone to the Minister of Finance and the minister of Advanced Education.

Time after time, we see claims made by that minister that are refuted by the facts. We've heard that minister say there was a contract when there was none. We've heard that minister say there was value for money when clearly that wasn't the case. And now the minister pretends that that government's acted to protect taxpayers' money when clearly that isn't the case. Mr. Speaker, with so many misleading statements, baseless claims, and claims that have been proven wrong, how can the public trust that minister's handling of its IPAC affair?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the member opposite take a look at the Crown Investments Corporation committee *Hansard* from June 27th, 2012 and he will see that I read the Provincial Auditor's recommendation into the record at that committee meeting. That is almost a year ago now, Mr. Speaker. And yet now he seems all surprised that the Provincial Auditor had actually audited the relationship between the U of R [University of Regina] and IPAC at the time that it was under management of the U of R.

He has seen the forensic audit that was done, and yet he seems so surprised whenever we reference . . . This particular audit was done after the board were alerted to the issues with the CVI contract and had taken steps. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure why he, day after day, seems so surprised when he has access to all of this information.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The audit was never shared by that minister, and we've just recently received that and been able to have a look at that. So that's new, Madam Minister. And as well, as it relates to the MNP report, that's only a result of an investigation that was put into instead of a government being straightforward with Saskatchewan people.

The report that was brought forward to the Minister of Finance highlighted that there was millions of taxpayers' dollars that were at risk of being wasted. That went to the Minister of Finance and the minister of Advanced Education. The auditor highlighted alarming risks as well over a dispute over the ownership of assets. Remember the unneeded, unboxed computers that no one knew what they were for? The university claimed ownership of those IT [information technology] assets that had been purchased with taxpayers' money from CVI. That's, of course, the private company CVI, the private costly start-up of that very government that was claiming ownership, the one that was funded with an OC [order in council] signed by that Finance minister.

My question isn't to that minister, it's to the Minister of Finance: upon receiving the auditor's report that raised the dispute over millions of taxpayers' dollars and ownership of IT assets, what did he do and when did he act?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just need to remind the member opposite again just to, you know, reference *Hansard* on June 27th, 2012 where the recommendations by the Provincial Auditor was read into the record. I mean he can read, I'm sure. If not, we can help look up that *Hansard* for him if he'd like. It can be done.

However in May of 2010, when the CEO [chief executive officer] was hired, a number of steps was taken by the board, Mr. Speaker. The funding was suspended at that time, the forensic audit was ordered, the relationship with CVI was severed at that time, and the assets were secured. They hired an

independent IT consultant to assess the services that was provided, and the funding control was moved from the university to the new entity of IPAC, Mr. Speaker.

Now again I want to repeat that that was initiated, started in May of 2010. And the Provincial Auditor's report, this memo that's truly a letter to the university, is dated August 2010.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I guess the problem was that as the board that she had members on was notified in November of 2009, the dollars continued to flow. The waste was still at play, Mr. Speaker, the waste that's been alleged, Mr. Speaker.

And that was a question not for that minister, but for the Minister of Finance. That minister has proven herself irresponsible in being able to relay the facts on this file and quite simply has lost credibility in handling this government's IPAC affair.

Almost three years ago, that Minister of Finance received a report from the auditor raising alarming risks and disputes involving millions of taxpayers' dollars. Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Finance: how did he resolve the dispute over ownership of IT assets with his government's costly start-up, CVI, the one he funded, and did it cost taxpayers more, more money after the point they had already purchased those assets in the first place, Mr. Speaker? Were more taxpayers' dollars used?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about incompetence. Honestly, Mr. Speaker, I have said the steps that were initiated in May. The report that he's referencing didn't come out till August, Mr. Speaker. He can count the months. I'm sure he can count the months. But May does come before August, Mr. Speaker.

So the board was already acting before the Provincial Auditor's report was brought down. Also, you know what, if he's so concerned, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, almost a year ago in committee I offered to tell him which personnel at the university were involved in getting involved with this contract, Mr. Speaker. He wanted to know so badly it took him nine months to then come to me and say, by the way, who are those people? I could have had a baby in that time, Mr. Speaker.

He's talking about incompetence. He keeps raising these questions. He doesn't want to hear the answers. He's playing that he's naive. We've given him timelines. We've given him reports. We have had so many audits on this file, of which we were only one-third funder of less than \$1 million if you count all of the funding that went to this and divided it by three.

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

Education Funding

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The

fallout of the province's budget has trickled out across the province. And we know now that, even after the expensive billboard ads and the radio ads, that Sask Party government is not convincing boards across this province that their choices don't have an impact.

In The Battlefords, the Living Sky School Division, the school board has been forced to dip into its reserves to fund day-to-day operations. And they were built up for emergencies, not day-to-day operations. Mr. Speaker, why has the Sask Party government left school boards no options but to dip into their reserves to fund education?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Marchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, our record on education funding is quite solid. This was not a status quo budget, Mr. Speaker, it was a 2.3 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. And that increase took into account considerable monies for current enrolment. We made that promise, Mr. Speaker.

The members opposite obviously are having a great deal of trouble with growth. They had trouble with growth for 16 years. In fact, there was no growth, Mr. Speaker. And our government is prepared to deal with the issues of growth. We promised current enrolment funding, Mr. Speaker; we gave that. We promised enrolment funding at the mid-year, Mr. Speaker; we fulfilled that promise, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we promised to address some of the infrastructure needs, Mr. Speaker. And to that degree this budget allows for the funding of up to 40 relocatables, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: — Next question.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In The Battlefords paper, the school board Chair, Ken Arseneault, said, and I quote, "We have to speak to the minister. We have to let our displeasure be known, but there's a reality here of our staff and our students that we have to support." And board member Kowalchuk said of the plan to transition the school divisions to new funding formula, "So all this time we've been hearing about this transition, but obviously we cannot believe what they tell us, because it's not there."

Mr. Speaker, the local school board, just like others across the province, are bearing the brunt of the government's lack of attention to real front-line education. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: why does the Sask Party have millions, \$5.9 million for standardized testing instead of real front-line education?

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Marchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I might attribute that to a bit of a rookie mistake. I haven't experienced that process before, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I'll make it up in the middle of my answer, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, again our record speaks for itself. In fact there was

transition funding expressed, explained in the budget, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that funding is in place for us to continue the good work that's going on in our school divisions, Mr. Speaker. A 2.3 per cent increase in funding is not a status quo budget, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: — Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker, arising out of question period.

The Speaker: — What is the Government House Leader's point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe if you review *Hansard*, you'll find that the member for Regina Rosemont accused the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation of making misleading statements to the House. I would call on the member to withdraw and apologize for those comments.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you review the record because clearly as you know and as we've discussed, these types of words and usages depend on the context. So I would ask that the Speaker review the context. And that language in and of itself in Beauchesne's on page 146 has not been listed as improper. So please review the context. I think it was appropriate in this circumstance.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Withdraw and apologize, if there was an intention to suggest that this minister has misled this House. There's many misleading statements that have been made on this file. That was the point that was . . .

The Speaker: — If the member is standing to withdraw and apologize, you simply have to say, I withdraw and apologize. You don't have to repeat the potential offence.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the answers to questions 274 through 301.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled answers to questions 274 to 301 inclusive.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 91 — *The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2013 (No. 2)*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to move second reading of a bill to amend *The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Act*.

Canada's Finance ministers have been examining the country's retirement income system for the past several years and have recognized the need for improved pension coverage among Canadian workers. In Saskatchewan, only 47 per cent of workers have access to a workplace pension plan.

The retirement income system in Canada is considered to be one of the best in the world, consisting of a blend of public and private programs. Canada's retirement income system is comprised of three elements often referred to as pillars by the federal government.

The first pillar consists of publicly-funded support programs, namely Old Age Security, OAS, and the Guaranteed Income Supplement, GIS. These programs are intended to provide a minimum level of financial support to Canadian seniors.

The second pillar consists of the Canada Pension Plan, CPP, which is funded through earnings-based contributions from employees and employers. Participation in the CPP is mandatory for all employed and self-employed Canadians.

The third pillar consists of private retirement savings, including workplace pension plans and registered retirement savings plans, RRSPPs. Participation in some occupational pension plans is a requirement of employment. Participation in other private savings plans is entirely voluntary.

To address the gap in retirement savings for workers, ministers proposed a new pension savings arrangement, the pooled registered pension plan, PRPP, which is voluntary, less complex, and less costly for employers, and which allows the assets of employees from multiple employers to be pulled into large, cost-effective pension plans. In fact the Saskatchewan Pension Plan was often described as a working model of this new arrangement during the development of the federal pooled registered pension plan legislation.

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

Since 1986 the Saskatchewan Pension Plan has grown to over 32,000 members and \$318 million under trusteeship. The plan is an integral part of the retirement savings plans of many Saskatchewan people. As well there have also been 1,088 new members that have joined the SPP in 2012; 83 per cent identified themselves as full-time, part-time, or self-employed.

The SPP 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.

Simple. The SPP takes pride in making the plan easy to join and easy to understand. They keep the paperwork to a minimum. What's more, they are always happy to answer any questions you may have and to assist you with any aspect of the plan.

Consistent. The plan philosophy is to invest cautiously over the long term. That makes it a good choice for anyone's portfolio, but especially for those with little or no investment experience. The plan is also voluntary. You are never obligated to contribute.

Flexible. You can make a contribution at any time during the plan year.

Portable. It is always your plan regardless of where you live or what you do.

Professionally managed. Investments are handled by a professional investment firm.

The SPP is the 28th largest defined contribution plan in Canada as measured by Benefits Canada in September of 2012. As a point of interest, the SPP targets overall administration fees of 1 per cent in its balanced fund.

The amendments being introduced today will lay the foundation to allow the Saskatchewan Pension Plan board of trustees to apply to become a licensed PRPP provider in the province of Saskatchewan. The proposed amendments will allow the board to create a non-profit corporation to administer the PRPP assets for the Saskatchewan Pension Plan. The creation of this corporation will allow these assets to be administered distinctly from the non-PRPP assets held by the Saskatchewan Pension Plan trustees.

Our government believes PRPPs and the Saskatchewan Pension Plan can provide an important new choice to help Saskatchewan people save for retirement.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of *An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Act (No. 2)*.

The Speaker: — The minister has moved second reading of Bill No. 91, *The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2013 (No. 2)*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm quite honoured and pleased to stand up today on behalf of the official opposition to give, certainly, our initial comments on this particular bill.

At the outset Bill 91, which really talks about improving the pension plan for workers, from our perspective as the official opposition, we look at this as being one particular tool that would be of significant value if we certainly do this right. I appreciate the comments made by . . . the many times that I've heard different levels of government speak about the need to protect workers and work with the private sector, Mr. Speaker.

And I think one of the points that I would really want to emphasize is the point raised by the minister, in a sense that when he mentioned that 47 per cent of the workers don't have the fourth pillar, if you will, and he spoke about the pillars of security as you age and the people that have made contributions over time in their lives, in their profession, that they do a lot of significant good for all their families and the people and the communities and the province as a whole. So at the end of their work years, at the end of their years of contribution, that we should look at every avenue of support that we can afford them, as a province and as a country, to ensure that when they retire and when they're in their latter stage of their life, that they're able to live comfortably and with a lot of dignity and security, Mr. Speaker. Those are some things that are really, really important.

So as we look at Bill 91, at the outset, we think it is one tool that needs to certainly be supported and also needs to be vigorously investigated to ensure that the intent of what the minister is speaking of today is followed through and that people are intricately involved in how this plan is rolled out.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when the minister spoke about the pillars, and certainly from the perspective of the support mechanisms that are out there, whether it's old age security being one of the pillars and the Guaranteed Income Supplement, Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of folks in my particular community and in my particular constituency, many of the older people that never had the opportunity to really participate in additional benefits as they aged.

So a lot of times in my particular work as an MLA, I will find that some of the senior citizens are living on very low incomes. And many times we helped them over the last number of years to ensure that they got the GIS because a lot of older people don't realize that you have to apply for the GIS. A lot of older people don't realize that you have to have your income tax all filled out for that year. And if they don't fill it out in that year, then July what normally happens is many of the older people don't get their GIS along with their old age security. And then all of a sudden the federal government certainly cuts them down from a 11 or \$1,200 allowance down to a \$550 allowance, which is the basic allowance under the *Old Age Security Act*.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a lot of the older people didn't understand that. And we took, it took us a lot of time as the MLA, and certainly my staff were involved, to explain in our own language, whether it's Cree or whether the people that work in the Dene communities for me, in that case being Dene, we needed to explain to them the importance of filing an income tax, the difference between the *Old Age Security Act* and the difference between a GIS. So on the first pillar, Mr. Speaker, I sincerely concur that it's one important pillar, but there's a lot more education necessary to encourage a lot of the older people to pay very close attention to the difference.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the second pillar that was made reference to, the CPP program, the Canada Pension Plan program, that is another important aspect that many, many workers are taking advantage of today. And again as they age, I think it's really important to note that they make contributions and over time that some of those contributions on a national basis should be paid back to them. And I think a lot of people understand CPP,

and a lot of people certainly benefit from CPP as well.

[14:30]

Now obviously the third pillar that was made reference to under the example of the RRSP, Mr. Speaker, there are many families out there that do take advantage of the RRSP option to complement the old age security, GIS program, to complement the CPP program. But, Mr. Speaker, there's probably a heck of a lot more families and workers that don't participate in the RRSP program. And we need to know some of those numbers as well, just so we're able to really ascertain as to how that pillar is complementing the other pillars as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of questions about how the three pillars interact, the knowledge of how the pillars operate, and the continual education for the people that these pillars are built for in terms of how they maximize their benefits. And I would say so much, Mr. Speaker, that there needs to be more educational opportunities for new and young employees that come along to talk about the value of the CPP, to talk about the values of the RRSPs because we know many Canadians, Mr. Speaker, don't plan well enough ahead.

And this is an effort, I think, when we talk about pension plans and the availability of pension plans and the sustainability of pension plans, that we also have to vigorously educate as many people as we possibly can to ensure that they know the benefits of saving to an RRSP, or they know the benefits of continuing to work and maximize their contribution to the CPP program, so they're able to prepare and plan out their latter years in life by complementing those incomes with an old age security plan and also understanding how the GIS interacts with their income.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of questions as to how much of these systems that the Canadian people understand. And there's a variety of reasons for that, Mr. Speaker. And I make reference to when I was younger, I didn't pay a lot of attention to CPP. I didn't pay a lot of attention to the *Old Age Security Act* because I was young. And certainly from the RRSP perspective, Mr. Speaker, I didn't pay a lot of attention to that as well. So what I'll point out is that as a young person that has a family, my priority at the time was to ensure that I had an income so I was able to sustain my family. I wasn't thinking 40, 50 years down the road; I was thinking more like 18, 20 years down the road, Mr. Speaker.

So that same situation that I was struggling with, Mr. Speaker, I know that there's a lot of families out there, a lot of young workers, men and women, that are trying to figure that out as well. And there ought to be something or there ought to be some effort, some mechanism, some initiative to explain how all these pillars interact with each other so that the people understand at a very young age the value of continuing to work, the value of continuing to save, and the value of preparedness for your old age.

Now, Mr. Speaker, under this particular program . . . And the point I'm trying to make, if we look at all the pillars that are made reference to, Mr. Speaker, is this PRPP program that's being introduced through Bill 91, it's an important cog for yet another support mechanism for the people as they age. And I think from the official opposition, we are generally in

agreement that this ought to be something that we support — not be something that we participate in — and that we understand fully.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'll go back to my earlier point on the pillars and the interaction of the pillars. We need to make sure that people understand this thoroughly. We have to make sure that . . . There are many people out there that are aged, and they are part of an association. We want their advice on this bill. We want to see what they would . . . what kind of insight that they would offer us. We need to know if there's any concerns they might have on this particular bill.

So while we're in general support, Mr. Speaker, as the official opposition, we want to make sure that we allow the time and the opportunity for people out there to study the bill, to participate with us or through the government, and give us ideas and means and ways that we can improve this, what I'll consider a fourth pillar, in terms of trying to make sure that we have a good, sustainable future for our people that have worked and contributed and as they age, Mr. Speaker.

Now one of the things I think with the PRPP in general, Mr. Speaker, is that we see the important aspects of being flexible. We think that that's many times is really important to have that flexibility there. We see that it's portable. We applaud that as well, Mr. Speaker, because you obviously have to have that particular aspect that's part of any program to prepare us for the older years. And, Mr. Speaker, this plan being professionally managed, there's no question in our minds that that is exactly what is necessary to make sure that it is professionally managed. And, Mr. Speaker, that's something that we would also support.

The problem we have, Mr. Speaker, is that this program is voluntary in nature. And we will need to see whether the voluntary versus that you have to absolutely do this, whether it's mandatory or voluntary, we need to have that discussion, Mr. Speaker. Because obviously from our perspective, as we look at the business community, and under our smart growth vision, Mr. Speaker, as the New Democratic Party, under our smart growth vision, we have to understand that there are, as the minister alludes to, 47 per cent of Saskatchewan workers that don't participate in a pension plan as of today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is a high number. And we have to reach out. We have to reach out as a government and as an opposition to those 47 per cent and explain to them that, look, with the job you have now and with the employer you have now, we can sit down and develop a plan here to begin that process, to begin to educate you on the value of having a PRPP in your workplace. Yes, the PRPP is flexible. And yes, it's professionally managed. And yes, it's portable. But we need to have the discussion whether it's voluntary or whether it's mandatory. We need to have those discussions. We don't have all the answers, Mr. Speaker, on the mandatory versus voluntary aspect of this particular bill. We need to find those answers, and the best way to do that is to have those deep discussions — and very deep discussions, Mr. Speaker — with the employers and the employees to see if there's a better way of doing this.

And that's the whole point of us going through the bills bit by bit here in the Assembly, to talk to the people out there to say,

is there anything better we can do on this particular bill to ensure that it meets its goals and objectives? And many times the government doesn't have all the answers, and this is why it's important to go out and outreach with those organizations that could give us some very solid advice, give us some very solid steps on how we can achieve some of the intent behind that advice, Mr. Speaker. So it's important that we send a message to the people that under the PRPP program, the pooled registered pension plans, that we ought to have some very solid, thorough discussions with the employers and the employees. Because it's one tool, if we do this right, it is one tool, Mr. Speaker, that could be very valuable for years to come.

Now the important thing is when you look at the retirement perspective, as you begin to, as they say, age out, you want to make sure that you look at all the assets and all the income and all the challenges you have as you leave the workforce.

Now obviously when we talk about the three pillars that was made mention of, you know, we need to know how those pillars interact and how this new program is going to impact it as well. While we see it as being generally positive, we need to make sure one important aspect when we talk about pension plans here in Saskatchewan. When people tell us, you need a sweeping review, a sweeping look at how all these pillars interact . . . Look at how the CPP operates, Mr. Speaker. There's many organizations, many intelligent people, people that are far more intelligent than I, that have a lot of sage advice on how we can do this.

And that's the point that the opposition wants to make. We understand the pillars. We understand the added value of the PRPP, Mr. Speaker. But we need to have a look at how it interacts with the other pillars that was made mention of, of how we can educate the public and how we can engage the employers and the employees on this plan, and certainly how we can build it better. And that's the point, Mr. Speaker, that many people that give us advice from outside — the people that have the information, the people that are part of a network, and the people that have a lot of the intelligence on this particular file — we need to reach out to them and ask them, what do you think of this particular bill? We think at the outset it's positive, but we need to find out whether there are improvements that could be made.

And the biggest argument that we would have today on this particular bill, Mr. Speaker, is that is it better to do it voluntary or is it better to do it mandatory? And I'm not sure if the minister took the time to go forward and ask these questions. I'm sure that there have been organizations that have given the minister advice. But many organizations that we deal with, they always talk about the issue of ensuring that they have their way or their input in this particular program and being engaged right from the start. That's really important for a lot of people.

And I would say, Mr. Speaker, that if you look at the whole notion of consultation, people have to know when the government say, we consulted with these groups, it doesn't necessarily mean they have agreement from those groups, Mr. Speaker. That's the really key point that I'll also make on this particular bill or any other bill that is out there. And that's why as the official opposition on Bill 91, when we want to engage people's consultation, engage their thoughts, and engage their

advice, Mr. Speaker, we also want to get their agreement that some of these things are important to have in this particular bill. And if they agree, then the opposition will take those points forward, and we'll certainly try and do our very best to amend the bill if it's for the betterment of the people that we're trying to serve. And hopefully the government of the day will realize that that's what the intent behind some of our efforts are. So on that point, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of work that is necessary to ensure that we have this bill done properly, we have the bill done very properly.

And also, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that if you look at the Canada Pension Plan, we need to make sure that people out there don't have the ability to change the benefits age from 65 to 67 as the Harper government done in Ottawa. And that's my point, Mr. Speaker, is that when you talk about the overarching need to interact with all the different pillars that was made reference to, you can't have that political interference, and you can't have somebody come along saying, we're changing the rules on this plan or any other plan. And that's why it's important to have consultation and agreement by the parties impacted, Mr. Speaker.

So I say again to the public of Saskatchewan that this bill is something that I think is genuinely positive. There's a lot of aspects you like to talk about in this particular bill. We want to do a lot of outreach to the organizations that are impacted by this bill. We think it's a first step in a long journey to make sure we have a sustainable social safety net for years to come for the people, for our people as they age.

But the key thing here is that they have to communicate back with the opposition. They have to communicate back with the Leader of the Opposition, with the members of the opposition, and present their views because this whole package of how we prepare ourselves for retirement is too important to be partisan. So we ask them to come forward, give us the information, give us the advice, give us the points that you'd like to raise, and we will certainly do our job as the official opposition to challenge the government to make amendments where necessary but to also support the bill if it's being proven valuable to the people that we intend to serve.

So once again, Mr. Speaker, a good first step for employers and employees. We hope that this work continues, and we still have a lot more work to do. So on that note, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 91.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 91, *The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2013 (No. 2)*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 92 — *The Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Saskatchewan) Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of *The Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Saskatchewan) Act*. Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to introduce a regulatory framework for pooled registered pension plans or PRPPs. PRPPs are a new kind of pension plan that will provide employees and the self-employed who do not have access to a workplace pension a low-cost retirement savings opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, there is widespread concern that Canadians are not saving enough for their retirement years. Statistics reflect this trend, and it's unfortunately now commonplace for individuals to work later into life because they find themselves with insufficient savings once they reach retirement age. This trend is especially worrying in regards to modest- and middle-income families and employees of small and medium-sized businesses. Mr. Speaker, in fact the Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimates that close to 80 per cent of employees of smaller businesses have no access to company retirement plans.

With this in mind, Canada's Finance ministers agreed on a framework regarding PRPPs in December of 2010. Following consultation with the public, stakeholders, and provincial and territorial governments, the federal government enacted PRPP legislation in December of 2012. While the federal PRPP legislation created a framework for all provinces to follow, it only makes PRPPs available to employees of federally regulated industries such as banking and telecommunications.

[14:45]

As you know, Mr. Speaker, pension regulation is primarily an area of provincial responsibility, so each provincial government must implement its own enabling legislation to make PRPPs available to all Canadians. Mr. Speaker, this bill ensures that Saskatchewan residents will have the opportunity to prepare adequately for a comfortable retirement by contributing to these new and innovative pension plans.

Unlike most workplace pensions, Mr. Speaker, a PRPP is managed by an administrator, not the employer. Once licensed to offer a PRPP, administrators will be closely regulated and subject to a fiduciary standard of care to ensure that the funds are invested in the best interests of plan members. Assets in a PRPP will be pooled together for multiple participating employers which will result in lower management costs for plan members. Portability of pension funds is a key component of the PRPP framework and will facilitate an easy transfer between plans. The overall simple design of PRPPs is intended to encourage participation by employers that may not currently offer a pension plan to employees due to the cost or administrative complexity.

While participating employers will not be required to contribute, they will be permitted to make direct contributions to a PRPP on an employee's behalf. Under the changes to the federal *Income Tax Act*, these direct contributions to a PRPP will be excluded from salary compensation and thus not subject to Canada Pension Plan contributions and employment insurance premiums. This feature will make PRPPs more attractive to employers than existing group RRSPs.

When an employer chooses to adopt a PRPP, employees will be

automatically enrolled but given the opportunity to subsequently opt out. While automatic enrolment for employees of participating employers encourages savings for retirement by those who may not have proactively saved on their own, providing employees with the ability to opt out ensures they retain the freedom to set their individual financial priorities. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, self-employed individuals or individuals whose employer chooses not to participate can open a PRPP account by approaching a PRPP administrator directly.

On retirement employees will have the same options for withdrawing assets for a PRPP as are currently available from a defined contribution pension plan in Saskatchewan. In particular the options on retirement are a registered retirement income fund, a variable pension benefit, or a life annuity.

Mr. Speaker, the government continues to encourage all Saskatchewan workers to plan for the future, recognizing that in order to provide an adequate level of income in retirement, individuals need to set aside sufficient savings over their working lives. The introduction of this legislation will provide more Saskatchewan workers with a simple, low-cost option to support their retirement savings.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of *The Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Saskatchewan) Act*. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General has moved second reading of Bill No. 92, *The Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Saskatchewan) Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to give our first . . .

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave to introduce a guest.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Highways and Infrastructure has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, it's a great pleasure to introduce the Hon. Steven Fletcher who is Canada's Minister of State for Transport.

I don't think Minister Fletcher needs a whole lot of introduction for anybody that follows politics at all. Steven was elected in 2004 and was on the two-year plan. He was elected and then re-elected in 2006 and 2008 — much to the chagrin I think of all those people that were campaigning every two years — and then again re-elected in 2011.

Steven is definitely an inspiration to all of us that aspire in the political game, Mr. Speaker, or have political aspirations. Steven has certainly been an inspiration. I am very fortunate to work with him through the federal government, and the work that they, the federal government is doing. I look forward to meeting with him, just after this introduction certainly, to talk about the second iteration of the Building Canada Fund, Mr. Speaker. The federal government has committed to carrying on that fund. We're looking at how that impacts, how it will have impact here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

So I'd ask all members of this Assembly to welcome Steven to our Assembly — as he's from Manitoba, I guess I can't say it's his Assembly — but we welcome him to our Assembly, and I ask all members to join me. Thank you.

The Speaker: — Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, to join in the introduction.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has asked for leave for introduction of guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure in welcoming Minister Fletcher to the legislature. Steven and I, he's a good friend of mine. We were elected in 2004 and were rookie MPs [Member of Parliament] together. And it's great to see you, Steven. And he's doing a great job as a minister, and it's great to have him here in Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too, on behalf of the official opposition, want to welcome the Hon. Steven Fletcher here. I think it's absolutely great to have you here. Welcome, sir, and we hope that your visit to Saskatchewan is absolutely productive and fabulous. And certainly it's always an honour to recognize MPs. So thanks for joining us and once again welcome to our Assembly.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 92 — *The Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Saskatchewan) Act* (continued)

Mr. Belanger: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I think on Bill 93, what this is, certainly from our perspective, is a complementary effort from a legal point to ensure that the PRPP process is under way. We certainly spoke at great lengths about the value of the PRPP and some of the challenges we may have with it. I'm not indicating that there is a lot of challenge to the whole process. As I explained earlier, there's a lot of discussion behind the PRPPs and their value and how the PRPP program interacts with the three other pillars that was made mention of.

And I think it's important to point out that from our perspective we understand that this particular bill is a complementary bill that's necessary to ensure that the PRPP program moves forward. Because obviously in a bill you certainly have the intent of the bill and then you also have the legal framework in which the bill has to process its way through. So obviously from this perspective we don't have a lot of comments on this particular bill. We look at it as a complementary effort to ensure that the PRPP program does exist and operate within Saskatchewan. And certainly from our perspective we look at this bill as part of the bigger package to bring forward the PRPP program to the benefits of many of our employees and certainly with the cooperation of the employers.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot more we want to say in general about the PRPP program. We see Bill 93 as a legal, complementary bill which is very necessary to ensure this thing moves forward properly. And on that note, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on 93.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 92, *The Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Saskatchewan) Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 93 — *The Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Saskatchewan) Consequential Amendments Act, 2013/Loi de 2013 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée *The Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Saskatchewan) Act**

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of *The Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Saskatchewan) Consequential Amendments Act, 2013*.

Mr. Speaker, the key purpose of this bilingual bill is to introduce amendments to *The Enforcement Of Maintenance Orders Act, 1997* that are required on account of the introduction of *The Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Saskatchewan) Act*.

The Enforcement Of Maintenance Orders Act, 1997 authorized the maintenance enforcement office to register support orders and agreements, record and monitor support payments, and take enforcement action when the required payments are missed or late. One particular type of enforcement action that the director of the maintenance enforcement office may undertake is to attach the pension funds of an individual who is in arrears on maintenance payments.

The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Act, 1997 currently authorizes this enforcement activity with regard to pension plans regulated under *The Pension Benefits Act, 1992* where a payer is more than three months in arrears and all other reasonable steps have been taken to enforce the maintenance order.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments will ensure the pension funds in a pooled registered pension plan account will also be subject to these important enforcement activities. So, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of *The Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Saskatchewan) Consequential Amendments Act, 2013*. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General has moved second reading of Bill No. 93, *The Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Saskatchewan) Consequential Amendments Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again I just wanted to make reference that the adjournment of debate that I made earlier was on actually Bill 92, it should've been not 93, Mr. Speaker.

But certainly from our perspective, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that again with the pooled plan here that we have in place, I think that it is certainly a noble effort that we undertake as MLAs, on both sides of the Assembly, to find ways and means in which we could strengthen the overall safety nets that many workers anticipate as they age. And, Mr. Speaker, certainly again as I pointed out, it's important to get advice and good sage advice from as many organizations and people as you can when we talk about how we plan the future for many of our workers. And certainly as they begin to age, you know, they'll need to be able to live comfortably.

So I think with the Bill 93, in general when we're talking about the legal framework and the work that is necessary to ensure that this PRPP program moves forward, it's one valuable tool. I'll say it again that there's probably many, many other tools out there that we could probably develop over time. And from our perspective as the opposition, as an opposition, Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that when we talk about smart growth overall, as a party and certainly as the official opposition, smart growth to us means really anticipating what Saskatchewan's going to look like 20, 30, 40 years from now.

And part of the smart growth strategy, we talk about pillars as well, Mr. Speaker, importance of engaging the private sector, Mr. Speaker. The importance of making sure that the environment is not, is not compromised, Mr. Speaker. But the most important thing I think overall is to make sure that the workers are well cared for. Because obviously, Mr. Speaker, without the workers, then no economy in this whole world can survive without the workers, Mr. Speaker.

So I think it's important that we point out to the people of Saskatchewan, under the NDP smart growth strategy, we have a long-term vision that has three or four key pillars to ensure that we continue building our province for years to come. And one of those pillars is to make sure that we protect the working people. And this particular effort, under the PRPP program, to encourage the employers that are out there to work with their employees to make sure that they're able to pool a registered retirement savings plan and put that into place so that they're

able to benefit from this as they get older and certainly when it's time for them to stop working and enjoy the fruits of their labour.

Now that's really important, Mr. Speaker, to point out that while we talk about the workers enjoying the fruits of their labour, Mr. Speaker, people in Saskatchewan know right now that overall as a society we are benefiting tremendously from the fruits of our labour force right now. The many men and women and young people that are working — whether you're an EMT [emergency medical technician], or whether you're a highways worker, or whether you're a firefighter, or whether you're a nurse, a doctor, a lawyer, Mr. Speaker — we're seeing that a lot of these working people are contributing to the common good of Saskatchewan people. And that's exactly the values and principles that we hold.

Now what happens is we can hold those principles, Mr. Speaker, and those values, but we have to make sure we put the proper tools and the proper mechanisms in place to ensure we do one thing: after all the contributors have contributed all they can, Mr. Speaker, that we make an effort to take care of them when they're no longer able to contribute.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have many people in our province today that we look at as elderly people. And many, many times, we thank them for their strength. We thank them for their service. And I can tell you today that we hope and pray, we hope and pray that we're able to make the latter years in many of our workers' lives today a lot better than some of our people that are experiencing now because many of the older people in our province are struggling. They are struggling and we need to recognize that.

So from our perspective as a party, as an official opposition, part of the smart growth strategy that we're looking at and we're developing has many moving parts. It's highly interactive, but the principles are the same: that you must look after your working men and women now because for the private sector, for the government, and for many of the organizations out there, without the solid strong labour force, Mr. Speaker, nothing moves forward. And we have to recognize that vital point.

And that's why it's important that we watch bills of this sort and we do all we can as an official opposition to support any mechanism, any mechanism to enhance the protection of workers and certainly look at the long-term benefits and health of those workers.

So I point out, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot more to say on this file. I've said a lot on all three of the bills. All these bills are part of a bigger package, and they're all working their way towards a PRPP plan.

[15:00]

And I think it's important that we say at the outset, and we say again as I close my comments here, that in general the official opposition looks at this step as a small step, a much necessary step. We have a lot more comments that we want to make on this particular file. But clearly, Mr. Speaker, it is a step in the right direction. And anything we can do to strengthen the hands

of the 47 per cent of the people that are working now that don't have any kind of a plan above and beyond the CPP, above and beyond the old age security plan, that if we're able to work with them and the employers to strengthen their financial position many, many years from now, I think that would indeed be a great service.

However we in the opposition are constantly calling for a huge look at how all the pillars — old age security, Guaranteed Income Supplement, the RRSP, the CPP, and now this plan — how it all interacts. And we need to see where we're at as a country to make sure we fundamentally take care of one problem 30 or 40 years from now, that people that begin to retire and dip into their pensions, that they have enough money and that they're able to live comfortably and secure after their many, many years of toil and labour.

That is the premise of what we're trying to do here, and this is the reason why we encourage people that have any comments out there to participate, give us advice, give us direction. And as the official opposition, we'll certainly fight that fight for you. And we'll continue pushing forward, if amendments are necessary, to make sure that this government follows through with what we think is important. And that is to do a first step with this program but look at how all the other pillars interact so that we're able to really, really put our minds to work to fix the problem for many, many years and fix the problem that people are asking us when it comes to the overarching safety net programs that are out there.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 93.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 93, *The Pooled Registered Pension Plans (Saskatchewan) Consequential Amendments Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 89

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Doherty that **Bill No. 89** — *The Creative Saskatchewan Act* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with a great deal of interest that I rise to participate in the second reading debate on Bill No. 89, *The Creative Saskatchewan Act*. And in this bill, Mr. Speaker, you've got a pretty good metaphor for the way that this government does its business. Are there some good things that are attached to this piece of legislation in terms of monies that have been earmarked for supporting the creative industries? Well yes there are. Does it

come forward in a time when this government is still presiding over the utter destruction of one part of that vital, creative sector in this province, the film industry, and the way that that industry and the people that have earned a living and told Saskatchewan stories, the way that they're still coping with the decision that was made in last year's budget? Well yes it does as well, Mr. Speaker.

And I guess the way that we see this piece of legislation coming forward, again, in terms of offering up support for commercializing and getting to market the tremendous creative content and experience that is out there in terms of music or publishing or crafts or visual arts, digital media, theatre, dance, again, Mr. Speaker, great. We're glad to see this come forward.

It's interesting in the second reading speech of the minister in introducing this legislation, he talks about the other jurisdictions that have brought forward similar vehicles for their jurisdictions to help do the similar activity in their province. And again it's great that Saskatchewan is trying to keep up with what is in one regard a best practice vehicle in terms of supporting the creative industries.

But again it begs the fact that for whatever good is being done on this side of the ledger, Mr. Speaker, you've got the destruction that is not repaired, that is not made whole, that is not corrected in terms of the way that this government made a decision and dropped an anvil on the head of an entire industry in this province with last year's budget. And the way that we now hear and we continue to hear stories about the way that that decision is causing an exodus of people that made a good living in Saskatchewan, that diversified the Saskatchewan economy, that told the Saskatchewan story with a lot of pride, Mr. Speaker.

And I have the great fortune of coming from a constituency where the creative sector is such a vibrant part of the constituency. Many people that earn their living through work in the creative industries — and certainly there were a lot of people that made a good living — added not just to the economic bottom line of this province through the film industry but added more to that cultural, that richness of, that quality of life that we should value as a people, Mr. Speaker.

And again I think of the people that have . . . They've had to find other means of employment or other provinces to move to, Mr. Speaker. And I think about the people that were attached to that, and I think about the companies that have left not just the province but left physically their previous offices in places like Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

And so in terms of that backdrop, Mr. Speaker, for something like this to come forward, it's again hard to take this government seriously. And it's hard to take them, even the good things that are contained in this legislation, at face value. You know, it wasn't a few years ago that this government was tabling the cultural policy paper in this Assembly and the way that that upheld and embraced certain things like the film industry and the success that was being had and the support that was there by that government for the film industry — until it wasn't, with last year's budget. And the way that that indicates the way this government makes decisions is frankly alarming, Mr. Speaker. And I think it's also cautionary in terms of the

amount of stock or the amount of reliance or trust that you can put in the actions of this government in terms of saying that something is important.

So even the things that are said to be important by this piece of legislation, even the efforts that seem to have dollars attached to them, Mr. Speaker, we'll be waiting and watching to see how those dollars actually flow and whether or not any of the hyped benefit is realized in terms of the piece of legislation under consideration here.

And again one of the interesting features of this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, is the very hands-on legislative authority that is granted to the minister in terms of directing the activities of Creative Saskatchewan. And again if that's operating under a number of the normal sort of safeguards and evidence-based decision making and making sure you've got appropriate process, that would be one thing.

But what we've seen from this government is the way that they didn't go out and do the economic analysis of the decision to kill the film employment tax credit until after the decision had been made. And then it was more about an exercise in damage control and crafting the narrative to repair some of the damage that they'd done in a communications sense. But of course the economic analysis and the hard numbers upon which decisions of that importance should be made, they didn't have them apparently before the decision was made. They went out and got them after.

And it's too bad that they didn't get out and get them before because what the analysis came back and said was that the independent study that's ultimately come to the light of day that was done by the chamber of commerce was that this was a valuable institution for the province, that it was an important support for an industry that added value to our economy, that added an enrichment to our cultural life in this province. It added vibrancy to the way that the Saskatchewan story got told.

And, Mr. Speaker, we saw them do that not once but twice, you know, in terms of going out and shopping around for a report to, you know, try and massage the decision and to communicate the decision after it had been made.

And again, Mr. Speaker, this government has shown itself to be interested in what a friend of mine likes to call opinion-based evidence making and that they come in after the decision is made. That they are that cavalier with the livelihoods of a lot of great Saskatchewan people, that they were that cavalier with the industry, and the damage that we've seen as a result is alarming, Mr. Speaker.

So again in terms of how this legislation plays out for the good or the bad or whatever, we'll wait and see, but past is prologue, Mr. Speaker. And as we've seen this government approach the cultural sector before and seen them come with what seemed to be on the face of them good initiatives, and to see how they play out on the ground, and then to see the kind of wanton disregard or the hostility that was on display with the decision that was made around ending the film employment tax credit, it's kind of hard to take anything else they do other than with a massive grain of salt, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And then again in terms of . . . Not content to have a bogus decision-making process such as that that kicked up the end of the film employment tax credit, this legislation enshrines the powers of the minister to direct the actions and activities of this entity being created under Bill 89. And you know, this is a minister who came to the file after the decision had been made but again carried the can for the decision and hasn't displayed a whole lot in demonstrating that there have been lessons learned from how this happened and the damage that it caused to a lot of different people's lives.

And what we see instead, Mr. Speaker, is a continuation of this. You know, their opinions matter more than the evidence, ramming ahead and trying to curry favour with a select few instead of genuinely consulting and coming up with a paper that bears resemblance to what's happening on the ground throughout the sector or with other industries. Again, Mr. Speaker, we saw how this happened a few years ago with the cultural policy paper and I think, you know, how that had one set of things that it stated and how we now see something else being practised.

So as we look at the potential of this piece of legislation, the positive benefit that could be there in this legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again we judge that against the actions of this government in the way that it has said one thing when it was on the hustings and looking for support and practised something very different when it came to the time to put the budget across.

So does one potential good outweigh the demonstrable damage that this government has done to the cultural industries, Mr. Speaker? Well I don't think so. And do people in the creative sector see these kind of efforts for what they are? Well I think a lot of folks do, Mr. Speaker.

And, you know, are there some actual benefits in this, potential or otherwise? You know, that's the hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But it's hard to keep that hope alive when you see, you know, time and time again — and particularly as relates to what happens in the cultural policy actions of this government, cultural policy choices of this government — see the way that the words and the hype never equal the action that is actually taken. So we'll be looking very closely to see how this plays out, Mr. Speaker, but again in terms of it's not just the tool or the vehicle; it's the people operating it.

And certainly this government has shown themselves to have some pretty interesting ideas when it comes to maintaining the well-being of the industry. So we'll see if they . . . You know, I'm sure they'll be rolling around the Junos and it'll be reminiscent of how certain members of that government liked to roll around different film sets once upon a time, Mr. Speaker.

But as people continue to leave this province, forced out by a decision of this government, as we continue to see the hype not being measured up to in terms of the action put forward by this government, again the minister can give all the fine speeches he wants. They can earmark the different resources that they want. But if it doesn't translate into real action, if it doesn't resonate with the way things are happening on the ground, then, Mr. Speaker, I think people will judge that for what it is.

[15:15]

And I guess my hope, Mr. Speaker, is that some day the people that we have lost . . . And I'm speaking in this sense particularly: I think of families that have been affected by this in Regina Elphinstone-Centre, by companies that have been affected by this in Regina Elphinstone-Centre. The kind of damage that this has inflicted is very hard to repair, Mr. Speaker. And people, once they've been driven out, are hard to bring back. So it is my hope that some day we can repair the damage of this. But it's not, lined up against the record of this government, Mr. Speaker, it's not a very fervent hope. But I do hope that some day the creative sector will have people that are in government that genuinely listen, that work in that partnership.

It's interesting. Another measure in this budget, Mr. Speaker, was the Saskatchewan Arts Board. And again we just celebrated the 65th anniversary of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, one of the first of its kind in North America. And of course that was brought in in the late 1940s. It was brought in by the then Tommy Douglas Co-operative Commonwealth Federation government that I know certain members over there like to rail on against the perils of. But you didn't hear any of that at the 65th birthday party for the Saskatchewan Arts Board.

And indeed that model has stood the test of time in the way that a government can work in partnership with artists and the arts industry to make for a better quality of life for artists and to make for that better quality of life for the rest of us in terms of making sure that that wonderful contribution that is made by artists is not equal to life in poverty.

And so if we see . . . You know it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, there was an increase for the Arts Board in the budget, and again we're glad to see that take place. But again it's pretty plain that it happened against this backdrop of the destruction of the film industry in Saskatchewan and the way that entire industry and hundreds of people and millions of dollars of economic activity were sucker-punched by this government and the way that, you know, it's hard to not connect the action of the one and the other and this being some kind of compensation and not support for these efforts in their own right.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the . . . again, it's that the minister would point to Ontario, with the Ontario Media Development Corporation a number of years ago, Manitoba having a similar corporation, British Columbia last fall expanding the mandate of the BC Film Commission, the province of Nova Scotia introducing legislation to form a similar agency. You know, again, these are great things and they're best practised.

But it begs the question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of how does it come forward now and how is it able to take place in all these other provinces, Mr. Speaker, and they didn't have to kill their film industry into the bargain?

So again, if they want to point out the examples of other provinces, and if they want to claim some sort of relationship to best practice around supporting the creative industries, Mr. Speaker, maybe what they could do is tell the whole story in terms of what's happening in those other jurisdictions instead of selectively picking and choosing things that support their narrative, which again, Mr. Speaker, tends to make you kind of suspect in terms of things that are hyped as good by this

government only to see them play out as something other than down the line.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, it's an interesting piece of legislation and, as I say, we'll be watching it very closely in terms of how it actually produces or plays out down the line and whether or not it lives up to whatever potential there is in this legislation, or whether or not it's yet another misadventure by this government, damaging misadventure. You know, in some cases it is destructive misadventures that this government is engaged in when it comes to the approach they have to the cultural industry in this province.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 89, *The Creative Saskatchewan Act*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Elphinstone has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 89, *The Creative Saskatchewan Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 75

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

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and engage in yet another of the same, as I was saying yesterday, one of the tools in the tool kit that the ministry responsible for municipal relations . . . Government Relations, but Municipal Affairs has put it forward. And it is an interesting piece of legislation. And I've reviewed his comments, and I will take some time to talk about what his comments were.

But I do want to make sure that I've also reviewed what our member from Athabasca was saying in response. And very thoughtful comments, because when we talk about the North, obviously there's unique challenges and specific concerns that they have that, by distance, often we don't appreciate. And I sure appreciate the comments that the member from Athabasca made because I think he was right on. He was spot-on in terms of the concerns. And I think these are the kind of things, when we talk about a growth strategy that this government is putting forward, was what does it mean for the residents, the residents of the North? Clearly the North is so important for our province and our provincial economy, particularly when it comes to forestry and to mining.

But the folks in the North, we have to think about their own local economy and how they connect. And whether it's through trapping or fishing, they have their special contributions that drive their local economy, but also drive and make significant contributions to our provincial economy. Not only . . . And I

think about fishing was not only something for our province, but also for Canada. And the freshwater fish co-operation . . .

An Hon. Member: — Best walleye in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes, best walleye in Saskatchewan. And so I think that this is an important, important area that we focus on. And I know when this goes forward to committee, there will be lots of questions from our colleagues in the North in terms of what it means.

But you know, it is very interesting, it is very interesting how out of touch a government can be. And as I go through this it will become apparent. And I think this is interesting. And when we talk about in light of the other tools that the government is talking about, whether it's growth around our cities, growth in specific RMs [rural municipality] and then what they talk about in the North . . . And he doesn't really talk about the same sort of things happening in the North, which I find a little alarming. I find it's unfortunate, because I think the North can be a strong contributor to our economy, and unfortunate this government hasn't done the kind of things that it said it would when there were promises made particularly around highways, and they haven't lived up to those promises.

And clearly in other important . . . the responsibilities of government, I think about housing. The housing in the North. I know our member from La Ronge has raised this continually. The member from Athabasca has raised this continually as a significant trouble spot for northerners where they see in many ways the Minister of Social Services, through Sask Housing, in many ways just abandoning or walking away from their responsibilities. And I think that's really alarming and we see that.

For example, when the minister speaks and he talks about the purposes of the amendments, first they'll support the government's competitive and growth strategy, and you know, talking about business licence, the overweight vehicle . . . [inaudible] . . . boundary alteration, municipal procurement, and that's a common theme through the whole set of pieces of legislation they have.

But what they talk about second, they provide northern councils with great ability to deal with inactive municipal development corporations, clarify provisions regarding northern hamlet incorporation, and northern settlement dissolution. And this is the one that really set my colleague off when he was talking about, what does it mean in terms of northern settlement dissolution and what's going to be happening there?

We see a concern that this government is taking a much stronger aggressive role when it comes to municipalities, and while they talk a line about co-operation, we are concerned that, what does this mean? And quite often we see in the North, their settlements may be, may be small. It's not something that necessarily is common in the South, but we have small communities and hamlets in our countryside here and we see that. It's the matter of a fact and it has worked well. There are challenges though. Clearly there are challenges, but particularly when it comes to providing services that we have come to expect, particularly around waste water and water, making sure we have adequate safe drinking water.

So there are challenges, but we find it interesting here that the government is focusing in on this. And I share with my colleague from Athabasca the concerns that he raises about how do we support northern growth, how do we support the development in the North in a smart, sustainable way that meets the needs of northerners, that has people coming back to live in the North or stay in the North. To stay in the North, I think this is an important challenge we have.

And so we're not seeing the kind of attention to that. And I think what's happening is that, as my colleague talked about, there are many, many concerns. He's been raising daily the issue around cellphone coverage in the North, how important that is, and that doesn't seem to take any traction on the government side. They're not paying any attention to that, and yet it's so critical. It is absolutely critical that we have cellphone coverage in the North in areas that the member has been identifying. I think that's important.

Highways, highways are critical. Critical. Good, safe roads. You know, yesterday we heard unfortunately of about five young people who died in motor vehicle accidents at work . . . in fact actually there were 10, I understand. Five of the others would not be in the youth category. But this is significant. We have too many fatalities on our roads and way too many in the North. And it's way too many right across the province but particularly in northern Saskatchewan. So when my colleague stands and talks about this, this is a critical, critical issue.

And he talks about housing. I will keep coming back to that because that's very important. So . . .

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

Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I ask leave for an introduction.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Greystone has asked for leave for an introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member.

[15:30]

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I'd like to point out an individual in your gallery. Waneek Horn-Miller is here. She's a very, very accomplished Canadian. She was in 2000 the co-captain for the Canadian Olympic water polo team. She's the sports ambassador for the Assembly of First Nations of Canada and has most recently been involved in a number of Me to We activities of the Kielburger family's efforts to help make sure that we're focusing on very positive and creative ways to engage our youth across the country. She took time out of her schedule during those events to engage a number of First Nations and Métis youth here within Saskatchewan.

We're delighted to have her back and we hope maybe for more

than a visit. Her husband, Keith, is just completing his work as a doctor. He's looking for residency opportunities and one of the options that they're exploring is right here through the University of Saskatchewan. And so to Waneek and to her family, I'll ask all members to join me in welcoming this esteemed Canadian and someone we hope we can soon recognize as being present in her legislature. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, to join with the member opposite, it's my honour to welcome Waneek Horn-Miller to her Legislative Assembly. And certainly she is an inspiration to so many Canadians, and certainly to so many Saskatchewan people and young people for whom she's taken some time to be here today. I looked up in the benches there, looking up into your Chamber, and I thought that was maybe who that was. And it was nice to see the member opposite recognize this inspirational leader to so many.

And now learning that her husband is looking for a residency, I do hope that Saskatchewan is lucky to have the two of them build their lives here. And we'll recognize that certainly down here in Regina is where we certainly can utilize some doctors' services. And all I'd like to say is, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, welcome to your Assembly. Thank you so much for the leadership you provide to many.

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 75 — *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012* (continued)

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I too would join in welcoming Ms. Miller here to the legislature. Always great to have guests and visitors to our House.

But as I was saying, that as we look through this northern municipalities amendment Act and the idea, the intention of this is to prepare municipalities for growth. And we've seen one for the municipalities; we've seen a tool, the legislation for the cities. So we have a lot of questions about this one in terms of what does it mean for northern Saskatchewan in terms of meeting their needs.

And as I've said earlier, the member from Athabasca highlighted several concerns, whether they be roads or cell coverage or whether it be housing, and we can go on, whether health care and even recreation and that type of thing that we would see and the ability to do work that is indigenous to their communities. And we've seen a lack of support around fishing, commercial fishing or trapping and that type of thing. And so we have some real concerns about the backstory to this actually, and we have to talk more about that.

And so it talks about that whole issue, about dissolution and that type of thing, and then also about wording and administrative matters, and that's straightforward. But the other part that . . . And this is one that again we sure do rely heavily and we appreciate the guidance of our northern members. But when we talk about intermunicipal agreements and arrangements, and whether that be the New West Partnership or Agreement on Internal Trade, and what does this mean in terms of northern communities? And I think that, as he was saying, what is the impact on having to, when you have smaller municipalities with smaller budgets, what's the impact of having to do these kind of procurement arrangements, where you have to offer either a Canadian or a Western Canadian tender, where you might just be able to be more effective to be doing it locally or in Prince Albert or Saskatoon?

And so there are some real concerns, real concerns about what does this really mean. And so I think that this is one that — as I said, we'll have lots of questions in committee — but it is one that we just have to make sure that we do the right thing here. And of course in all of these we have to do the right thing because clearly there are unique challenges, unique needs as we go through this growth process. And this is a good thing, good to be growing. We're all on board with that. But we've got to do it in an intelligent way. We have to have smart growth, sustainable growth, and particularly when we see in the North the challenges to uncontrolled growth if it's not done well.

There are challenges in the North that we have to make sure our regulations stay strong or even stronger. And I'm talking about in terms of forestry. Forestry in the North is incredible. We have the wonderful lakes, and we see the challenges in terms of new industry, particularly on the Alberta side. What's the impact on the Saskatchewan side? We have to be strong on that. And what do these agreements mean for that? What do the agreements mean for that? And so these are the kind of challenges. And I just think that when we have the opportunity to do the right thing, this is one of those things that actually I think do cross party lines. And I hope the government does rely on all advice and think about the implications and the unintended consequences if we don't think this all the way through and think about the long-term needs of our northern Saskatchewan residents and make sure that they're supported.

Resources are a challenge. Financial resources are a challenge because there is a bit of a line that you hit where it just costs the same. And so if you're going to involve auditors, if you're going to involve certain consultants, then it's a significant cost. So we have to make sure we do what we can to support northern communities. And we also have to appreciate the distance issues that they face, and make sure that when this province grows that everyone feels the benefit and everyone's coming along, and whether you're a child in a school in southern Saskatchewan or a child in a school in northern Saskatchewan, you are supported, that you are supported. And your unique challenges that you have are brought into consideration and your own special background. This is something that is very important.

And so I think that we need to think this through. This is very, very, important. I know that these members on our side will be watching this very closely, particularly the northern members from Cumberland and from Athabasca. And it's interesting

because their ridings are so huge, and we know that in rural Saskatchewan ridings are huge. And as I have remarked in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I fortunately come from one of the, I think maybe the smallest riding in the province. I have a lot of appreciation for the folks who work in rural Saskatchewan, but particularly the North. When we think about the member from Athabasca and the time he takes to come down to Regina every week, it is a significant, significant drive. But it is for many people in this House. But I have to say I think that he gets to ride over more highway miles than anyone in this riding. So when he talks about good highways, he certainly has some experience and he knows exactly what's going on.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that when we talk about the growth, and we have . . . And I have interestingly over the last two or three days I think I've spoken on every one of bills that the Minister of Government Relations is bringing forward. And he has talked about the unique challenges. But perhaps this one is more important than the others only because there is more vulnerability in doing something not quite right and the fact that there is such a distance and the fact that some of these villages and hamlets and settlements are so small that we don't hear their voice. And they don't have the opportunity to come down and make a presentation or present a petition, that they do feel isolated.

And I think of the folks from Wollaston Lake who actually made the trip down here and made their case about their roads. That was not an easy thing. They're not driving in from Moose Jaw, or they're not driving in from Saskatoon. Clearly, clearly it's an issue and one if they could make that kind of commitment to bring their concerns to this House, then it's important. And I know that the member from Athabasca, when we do have delegations from the North, he makes a point of welcoming them in their own language but also saying, be clear, this is their House. This is their place. And while they may lack the finesse of others who come here so often to do lobbying, we need to hear their voices.

And so again in summary, that I want to reflect on what the member has said, that we think in a positive way towards the North, that we think about them in terms of growth and maybe a different type of growth. It may not be the kind of explosive residential growth that we see on the edge of our cities. But we need to plan for the kind of growth that's environmentally sustainable because they live in a place that really wears a lot of our environmental degradation, and it's in places that we don't get to see but they get to feel every day. And this is huge.

But they want to be part of that. They want to be part of the mining that's going on in the North. They want to be part of the forestry. They want to be part of the fishing, the trapping, the health care, the education, all of that. And they just want decent housing and they just want decent roads. They want decent schools, like we all want decent things.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I think I'm ready. I think I'm ready to move on to the next step. And I'm waiting for . . . I think I'm ready for the next step, and so I'm waiting to move this to adjournment. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: — I believe I heard the member from Saskatoon Centre has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 75,

The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2012. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 90

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Reiter that **Bill No. 90 — *The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2013*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill No. 90, *An Act to amend The Planning and Development Act, 2007*. And, Mr. Speaker, as I've commented on a number of bills this session, there's usually a fair bit of politics involved in the naming of the legislation. And this one looks like it doesn't have politics involved, but I think it actually has lots of politics involved because I think the real name for this piece of legislation is an Act to amend the planning and development Act, 2007 to allow for rural amalgamation to implement the government's growth plan.

Because when we look very carefully at what the minister said when he introduced this legislation, he said that there is a concern by members in the government that there's not necessarily total agreement between RMs and cities or RMs and towns as they make plans for economic development in their region. And what this legislation does, it allows for the minister to override the city government and the rural municipality government to establish a regional planning authority to deal with specific issues.

Now the reason I bring this up right at the beginning of my remarks is that we don't see in the remarks from the minister or from the information that has been provided around the introduction of this bill that there has been any consultation or even a little consultation with the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities or with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association. Because I think that there's a concern by both of those groups in various ways around what is actually intended with this legislation.

[15:45]

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the powers that are given in this legislation do allow for a total planning structure or regional structure for the province but for it to be done in a sort of piecemeal or a I suppose like a crazy quilt kind of pattern where they do different things in different areas. So that's what's in here. And I say that because when you look at different sections in the legislation, it's very clear that the minister is given the power to take over local government. And I think that obviously there would be a fair bit of reaction to that but here in the legislation, that power is there.

Now let's compare what's happened in Alberta. Alberta went

ahead with a plan like this for the whole province which allowed for regional planning and development and setting out rules, and clearly it caused quite a political discussion in Alberta. But at least it was a plan that covered all corners of the province, and it did it in a way that there would be public discussion about that.

But here in Saskatchewan, we have something which has arrived as Bill No. 90 in this legislature — it's pretty late in the session — and it doesn't appear that there's been consultation around its development. So it raises the question, why is this bill here? Well it could be that this relates to the Minister of the Economy and his frustration around some of the events that happened between the Global Transportation Hub, the RM of Sherwood, and the city of Regina. It could be that some of the confusion that arose there related to the Kal Tire proposal forced the Minister of the Economy, but also other ministers that were involved in that particular issue, to look at what kind of powers the province actually has or more importantly doesn't have right now to step in and impose their perspective on what was going to happen.

And so I'm not totally certain whether that's the main trigger, but I think there also have been disputes around many of the cities of Saskatchewan that relate to the growth of the community.

And so the question becomes, how do you plan for that growth? How do you do it in a way that includes everybody rather than having an imposed solution that probably . . . Well we don't actually know where it comes from other than it comes from the minister. So when you look at the minister's remarks in his second reading speech as he introduced this legislation, it's clear that there's concern about the issues that have arisen.

So maybe the trigger was some of the issues around the city of Yorkton. We know that there've been some tensions there. There's been tensions around I think both Estevan and Weyburn as the development is there. There's clearly tensions around Saskatoon. I know that when we've looked at other legislation that's proceeding in this session, and primarily I think it relates to *The Municipalities Act* and the rural municipalities Act, there are similar kinds of adjustments that are being made. But clearly what was introduced there didn't go far enough for the minister or for the Premier and the government, and so they've brought forward this Bill No. 90 which adds that little last draconian touch that says, well we'd like an agreement in your neighbourhood on how to put together an economic plan, a regional plan, but if you can't get it together in the short timelines that we have for you, we have a solution here. We'll just deliver it, and it will do it under this new legislation.

So it's an interesting way to govern. It's not necessarily the way that we've traditionally developed local government legislation in Saskatchewan. It's one that we've already been receiving calls over the last couple of days about because nobody really knows what its intended purpose is. And so I think that when we look at the legislation, we need to be very careful about what is actually being proposed.

And so what we have is a creation of a regional planning authority which effectively takes over the power of the region that's designated and effectively gives that power to a new

authority where the members of the authority are appointed by the minister. And it also then basically gives the minister the ability to create a budget for this regional planning authority, put in half the money, and force all the local municipalities — the urban municipalities or rural municipalities — to pay the other half of whatever budget they set up.

And you know, it's an interesting perspective. It's an interesting way to deal with particular issues, but it's not one that's built on a consensus or consultation or on a discussion with a whole number of the participants that are there. And so I think, you know, we will need to ask some more questions about this. We'll need to talk to various groups that are affected by this legislation. We'll need to understand whose idea this legislation is or was and get a sense of what the purpose of the legislation is going to be.

I think that one of the clear factors or one of the clear issues . . . Well there's two or three clear issues that need to be resolved before the legislation proceeds. One of them relates to the environmental issues that might affect an area — in other words, some of the protections that are there and how that will be developed. Another relates to taxation and how revenues might be shared or not shared. Or what's the plan in that area? And clearly who pays for the infrastructure that may be needed when it is basically going through a whole number of urban and rural municipalities?

And so I think there are words here that try to describe some of those things, but how this will actually work appears to be that there will be a ministerial fiat or a Premier's order in council kind of fiat that says, this is what we're going to do, and then everybody else will have to contribute to that. That's not normally the way we work in this type of legislation, and so I think it raises a number of flags for people right across Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are concerns here about this rural amalgamation legislation that has much broader implications than has been identified by the minister or by any of the accompanying information to this legislation. It's come into this legislature quite late in the session, and it appears there's some urgency to get this one moving along. That raises red flags for all of us on this side of the House. I'm sure it probably raises red flags for many of the caucus members on the government side because usually there should be a longer process when you're making this big a change to what happens in the province of Saskatchewan.

But I know a number of my colleagues want to comment on this, and we're receiving communications from various people across the province, which we will want to place into the discussion. And so with that, I will move to adjourn the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Lakeview has moved to adjourn debate on Bill 90, *The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter into debate as it relates to Bill No. 76, *The Municipal Board Amendment Act, 2012*. I'll review some of the statements that have been made by the minister as it relates to the intentions of this bill, make some comments as it relates to those statements of the minister and as it relates to this bill.

Certainly we'll be seeking further consultation with sector stakeholders to ensure that they've been fully consulted in this process and to ensure that their views are included in this discussion and make sure that we as the opposition, along with government, fully understand all of the impact, all the consequences, intended or unintended, on the sector and on partners.

This bill in general sets out a change process for the boundary alteration process or annexation processes. Any change of this nature we're going to evaluate through a lens of ensuring fairness and effectiveness of those processes.

Of course the vast majority of these processes are resolved between the parties without any other body entering into those discussions. But at times there is another body that enters into those discussions to assist with that process, that being the Saskatchewan Municipal Board, and certainly recognizing that these, at times, stalemated discussions or processes are sensitive matters, and there's a lot of care, a lot of concern. You're dealing with land that in many cases is long-standing and has played a significant role to rural municipalities. And as well we have the circumstance of growing urban centres that we need to make sure that are able to grow in a responsible way, and in a responsible way though that's transparent and respectful of their rural partners.

So as we go through the consultation on this piece of legislation, we'll be doing full consultation and inviting comments and analysis and perspectives from both the urban municipalities through SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] but as well our rural municipalities through SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities].

As well we'll be understanding the impact on the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. Certainly the Municipal Board plays an important role in our province in providing a role where it can adjudicate circumstances. It plays a role where it can review and can make decisions of a judicial nature. And that certainly is important to all communities, all partners, to make sure we're supporting that Municipal Board, to make sure they can be as strong and effective as they can be.

I'd certainly at this point in time provide thanks to the members of that board and those that have served previously for the

service they provide to our province. And I know they recognize the sensitivity to the disputes that they are sometimes asked to enter into, and I know that they understand the importance of fair processes for all parties. And certainly that needs to be the case when we're dealing with our municipalities.

When I look at some of the changes that are brought forward here, I see a few different areas. I see some changes just to the Municipal Board itself, where there's changed provisions to allow membership of that board to be larger I guess, Mr. Speaker. And I believe this speaks to, as the minister said, a need to have a level of flexibility to that board to deal with cases where there may be . . . where a member may be a party to the affected party in that application or where that member's municipality might be impacted. So certainly if that is a successful way of ensuring no concern over conflicts of interest, that's something we would be supportive of.

[16:00]

As well this brings around some accommodations as it relates to the ability for members of the Municipal Board to do so I believe in a more casual or part-time nature, enabling them to serve the board. What we'll be seeking from the minister in the days and weeks ahead, and certainly from the sector, is just to ensure that those members are of the same qualifications of the full-time members of that board. Certainly that's important. In many cases these are very experienced, very senior individuals with a high level of expertise and a high level of integrity in their service to the province of Saskatchewan. We want to ensure that the changes that are being made here certainly don't hinder or reduce those qualifications that have I believe served this board well and the people of Saskatchewan well.

We also recognize there's been some changes as it relates to the pension plans to make sure I believe that if an individual is recruited to serve within that board, that there's better portability of pensions, better continuance of pension benefits, and ensuring that in the demanding role that it is to serve on the Municipal Board and to fulfill service for the Municipal Board, that they're able to recruit and retain individuals with the skill sets and education and experience that's required to do so. And I believe what I've read here, that this is a tool to allow individuals who have possibly long histories in local governments to be able to effectively take on that role with the Municipal Board and not be penalized by way of their pension circumstances, their income security. And certainly I'll be following up with the minister to ensure clarity as to what those specific changes are and what those impacts are.

I look at a few of the other changes that are being put forward. This changes some of the process around the SMB, the Saskatchewan Municipal Board's processes and abilities as it relates to the municipal boundary alterations, and this is particularly important for those circumstances. And like I say, they're rather rare circumstances but they do occur, where communities, rural municipalities and their neighbouring urban municipality, can't reach an agreement — or any municipalities that are dealing with the circumstance of boundaries and annexation.

So this allows some changes as it relates to making sure I guess

that that process is as effective as it can be. We'll be analyzing to ensure that's just the case. But we'll be really analyzing this to make sure that it's a fair process, to make sure that this isn't a heavy hammer of government, that it's a fair process for both parties, that it's not tilted in favour of one type of municipality or another. And those will be the kinds of considerations we'll be taking as we move forward.

I believe this bill also, as I say, makes some changes to allow . . . to pension plans and for part-time members to ensure that the Municipal Board has the capacity that it requires to fulfill the duties that it needs to to the people of the province. And it also brings around some clarity around wording, some, if you'll say, modernization, Mr. Speaker.

Now the minister suggested that it's been broad-based consultation on this front with municipalities and with the Municipal Board. That's important. We'll certainly be ensuring that that's the case. We've unfortunately heard that before from this government, Mr. Speaker, where they've suggested that they've consulted, and we've realized afterwards through consultation or from parties stepping forward or stakeholders stepping forward that that hasn't been the case.

But it's essential to make sure that those that are impacted, in this case the rural municipalities, the urban municipalities, have been very thoughtfully consulted on this process to make sure that their perspectives, their understandings of the impacts are well understood and reflected back into the changes by way of this legislation because, as I say, when these matters do become a dispute, and a dispute that needs to be dealt with by the Municipal Board, at that point in time these are very sensitive matters and require the most thoughtful and fair process that we can avail to these communities.

I also recognize that this bill I guess brings different changes to allow the Municipal Board's secretary to ensure by way of that process that they're reviewing the applications of the municipalities for completeness before they come before the process of the Municipal Board. And the minister suggests that this will allow effective and timely consideration of the applications, and that seems to make sense, Mr. Speaker. I suspect that the change is coming because there may have been incomplete packages that were coming before board processes, and then the members of the board were there to be engaged and those resources were availed. And likely at that point if those applications weren't complete, that process maybe was then delayed to a later time. And certainly that doesn't seem to be the most efficient or effective use of the resources of the Municipal Board or that of the municipalities, the parties that are involved in the dispute.

So as the minister has referenced that this should speed up the process, we're all for speeding up that process, as long as it's ensuring the preservation of fairness through that process and levers for municipalities and parties that are impacted to make sure that their voice, their case, their concerns, their analysis, their perspective can be heard.

Another aspect of this bill is to urge . . . I guess even more than urging, to require, if I'm reading the minister's statements correctly, require mediation to settle the dispute prior to engagement with the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. And that

seems to be . . . And I'm just trying to make sure I understand whether this is voluntary by way of mediation or whether this is simply recommended. It seems to me that that's now a firm part of the process put forward by the changes to the Act, that mediation must be engaged in prior to entering into processes with the Municipal Board. I suspect the government's hopeful that a voluntary settlement can be achieved through a mediator as opposed to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board in the end making a decision and possibly imposing a decision on parties. And at first blush that seems to make some sense.

That being said, the way to know that best is by listening to those parties that are impacted, those that are on the ground in the communities across Saskatchewan that are dealing with annexation, that have gone through these processes, and making sure that there's not any unintended consequences to the changes that have been put forward here today. But certainly the prospect of voluntary settlement and through a mediation process seems to be preferable to that of one being imposed by the Municipal Board or any other authority, for that matter.

I also understand that this bill brings forward changes that allow the Saskatchewan Municipal Board to break apart some of the disputes and the applications and to piece those apart and to make decisions and adjudicate on specific pieces, which is suggested by the minister to allow this then, these decisions to not simply be an all-or-nothing decision, but to allow some agreement to be formed or some statements to be made as it relates to parts of the dispute or parts of the applications, which then may aid the settlement and possible voluntary settlement, I would suspect then, of other aspects of those processes. It may allow a better circumstance for compromise. And certainly again this seems to make sense, but we need to make sure that those that are impacted, our rural municipalities that provide such a great service all across our province or urban municipalities that provide such a valuable role to the people of this province, that they've been consulted, that they've been listened to, and that their voices have been built into this legislation.

Far too often we have legislation show up in this Assembly by that government, legislation that's come without listening to the public, or they've listened to only some sometimes, Mr. Speaker, those that may have a close relationship to that government as opposed to everyone. And certainly we'll be looking at this from a very even-handed perspective and making sure that this is fair to all stakeholders and that a fair process is availed to those parties.

And I've highlighted some of the other changes as it relates to membership and those that are able to serve the Municipal Board. Again those individuals fulfill a very important role to the people of Saskatchewan. They're dealing with very delicate, sensitive matters, issues that can sometimes be, that can heighten . . . The debate can be heightened at times and the stress level can be high, and we really do need to make sure that we're supporting the capacity of that Municipal Board to be as strong and as effective as it can be. And if some of the changes that are put forward here allow that Municipal Board to be supported, for that capacity to be in place, then that's certainly a good thing.

Looking at one of the changes that certainly we'll be seeking

clarity from the minister, it's just a statement here as it relates to the *Gazette*, of course being a publication and a requirement of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. There's changes that are being made. They're changing that that *Gazette* need only be published once a year as opposed to twice a year as has been historical practice. The minister is suggesting that this is consistent with other Acts, and that may be true. We'll certainly ensure we understand the nature of this change, the impact of the change.

But it also changes and removes references to repealed legislation as well as discontinued board functions. And I would ask the minister opposite who hasn't clarified this at all in his statements, why he's making those changes and what's caused the decision to repeal that sharing of information with Saskatchewan people as it relates to repealed legislation or discontinued board functions. And I'll make sure as well that we understand what the potential impacts are on the partners within the sector, the municipalities across our rural and urban communities, making sure that we're not depriving valuable information that's being utilized to those municipalities. So I have more questions than answers as it relates to the removal of references to repealed legislation and discontinued board functions. I will be seeking answers from the minister in the course of processes ahead such as committee.

The minister goes on to close his statements with some discussion around consultation. As I say, that's essentially so important here. We'll be ensuring that that has occurred and that the voices, the analysis, the perspective of those on the ground that are dealing with these realities has been listened to, has been heard, and is built in and reflected in this legislation.

Far too often that government has selective hearing, only hears from one side of the debate, Mr. Speaker, often those that are just closest to this government. That's not how good government should work. The government of course should be listening to all parties, making decisions in the best interests of all, Mr. Speaker. And certainly we'll be making sure that this legislation reflects that sort of process. And it's certainly my express hope that that's the case.

We have certainly more questions as we move forward. I know some of the changes to the municipal board have been suggested to provide flexibility and expediency. That's good but not to forsake any level of fairness and effectiveness of those processes for those hard-working councils of our rural municipalities or urban municipalities across Saskatchewan.

Recognizing the importance of the Municipal Board, we'll certainly be making sure we're ensuring that this does in fact strengthen the capacity and ensure that level of fairness back to our municipalities, and that we're strengthening both the capacity of the Municipal Board but also the effectiveness of processes for annexation. And of course in a growing province, annexation and boundary alteration processes are a reality that many communities are facing. And we need to make sure that as those communities enter into those processes, that those processes are processes they can trust and that they can enter into with good faith, recognizing, as I say, the sensitivity to these decisions, and recognizing the fact that I think is very important is that the vast majority of these processes are resolved in a co-operative fashion between the parties. But for

those circumstances where they're not — I believe the minister stated that about 12 per cent aren't resolved in that co-operative fashion and were requiring a decision and an engagement with the Municipal Board — we want to make sure that that process is as respectful and fair as it can be to all parties.

Those will be our interests, making sure that we're building legislation that serves today and serves the next generation here in our province, Mr. Speaker. But at this point in time, I've certainly exhausted the comments I'll place on the floor of this Assembly. I certainly do have more questions for committee as it relates to Bill No. 76, *The Municipal Board Amendment Act, 2012*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[16:15]

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Rosemont has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 76 . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, committee? Oh, sorry. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 76, *The Municipal Board Amendment Act, 2012* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

The Deputy Speaker: — I designate that this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

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 Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's certainly my honour to rise today to join in the debate on Bill No. 77, which is *The Horse Racing Regulation Amendment Act, 2012*. And for such a tiny bill, it's really interesting to see the impact that this has had on some of the people in Saskatchewan who've been engaged in the horse racing industry for over 100 years now.

And I think it's a bit of a mystery actually why the government is proceeding in the fashion it has chosen in this particular instance because its decisions have effectively destroyed the harness racing industry here in Saskatchewan. It's finished. And I'll explain why that is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the next few minutes as I enter into the debate on this bill.

Just in terms of the nuts and bolts of the legislation itself, *The Horse Racing Regulation Act* is a very short bill. It was six sections long. And basically it had restrictions on how often races could be held and that is in consultation with the government, and that one track is allowed in a municipality, which is an interesting provision from days past, I believe. But section 3 of the existing Act says:

In any city, town, 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 that's interesting that a municipality has been limited to having only one racetrack, and who knows what the impetus for that was? But in reality there's only about four active racetracks in Saskatchewan entirely in the province so obviously that hasn't been an issue and that may be something that's revisited in the future.

The fourth clause sets out the intervals between meetings so it tells how often races can be held, and it says that:

... 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.

So there has to be at least 10 days in between these sessions and the Liquor and Gaming Authority is responsible under *The Alcohol and Gaming Act* to set the dates for those meets or horse races.

And then finally there's a penalty clause in section 5, and section 6 is the one of most importance in terms of the amendments that are being presented in Bill 77. And section 6 sets out the tax that's being currently levied upon the parimutuel bets. So these are for every bet that's laid on the horse race, there is a tax currently that's collected. And the entire purpose of this bill is to repeal that portion of the Act. So I'll just get into that a little bit now.

The Bill 77 again is also quite a short bill, as I indicated earlier, and the changes that are being made is the first substantial and the main substantive clause is to repeal the section 6 of *The Horse Racing Regulation Act* which is the parimutuel section, the tax on parimutuel betting that I referred to a minute ago.

There is a couple of other consequential amendments that are required in order to make the repeal of section 6 valid and that deals with some sections of *The Revenue and Financial Services Act* which outlines all the taxes that are in the province. So in section 47(1) of that Act there's a reference to the tax on parimutuel betting. That's repealed and there's also part V of *The Revenue Collection Administration Regulations*. So these are the regulations under that Act which dealt specifically with the parimutuel betting, and that whole section

is being repealed as well.

So it seems pretty simple, doesn't it? Change, repeal one section of an Act. No more taxes on parimutuel betting. Well the story, Mr. Deputy Speaker, goes much, much farther than that.

In terms of the balance for the horse racing industry in Saskatchewan, what has been happening by agreement with the government is that the tax, the parimutuel tax, was then returned to the industry. The government collected the tax through the operators. They collect the tax, remit it to the government, and then that money was being refunded back to the industry as a whole in the form of a grant.

So what this has essentially done is it's kind of an in-and-out and so it basically nets itself out. That makes sense and certainly the minister in her comments when she introduced the bill alluded to that. Because she said that this announcement was made in October of 2012, and so on November 26 she introduced the bill and they announced they would eliminate the parimutuel tax that was being collected for horse race betting. And what she indicated was that the 10 per cent tax was applied to wagers both on live horse racing and in teletheatres outside of the province. And then the operators had to collect and remit the tax and then it was returned to the industry in the form of grants, as I indicated. And she indicated the total in 2011 in tax was about \$850,000 which was returned to the industry. So that makes sense.

Then the minister indicated she was approached by the industry itself and asked to have the parimutuel tax repealed. The government considered the arguments and now acted on that consultation. So she described it as a win-win for both the government and the horse racing industry. By eliminating the tax it allows the industry to determine how to use those funds themselves rather than coming from the government in the form of a grant.

I think the good news actually stops there though, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And if you look at the impact of the policy decisions around this you will see that there is another piece to the puzzle which is important, and particularly to harness racing or the standardbred racing here in Saskatchewan. And there was a presentation that the association put together which I am able to refer to today and what they indicate is that the 100 years history of the Standardbred Horsemen's Association is in jeopardy. And in fact, this is bearing out to be true. These concerns were very, very strong at the time that the minister introduced the bill because there's certain policy pieces that have to go along with the bill in order for this industry to survive.

So it's important to understand that in the horse racing industry in Saskatchewan, there's two types. There is the thoroughbred racing which generally takes place at Marquis Downs in Saskatoon. And I actually spent a couple of summers working in there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and certainly know the excitement and fun of the racetrack and the thoroughbreds and when you hear the announcer say, and they're off. And the excitement raises, and then the race is over and people have something to drink and some popcorn, and a nice sunny summer night. It's a great way to spend an evening with friends.

Standardbred racing of course is more the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes there's West Meadows in Regina and there's one in Yorkton, I believe, and one other area that I'm forgetting right now. I think Davidson has some. And this is the harness racing, which is a completely different form of racing, but it's still exciting and a whole lot of fun. And the industry is saying, let's keep both of these going. Let's keep both the thoroughbred going and the standardbred going.

So we know in 2012 the government announced that the funding was going to end; the grant money was going to end. And that would have been the end for harness racing. But then the parimutuel tax was eliminated, announced in October. Now as the industry points out, this is only good for the thoroughbred industry at Prairieland Park.

You can ask yourself, well why is it only good for thoroughbreds? What's the difference? The key, Mr. Speaker, to this legislation is the notion of something called home market areas. So HMA is a home market area. And what that does is it gives the ability for . . . This is established by the Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency and what the home market area does is protects the area, the home market area where the racetrack is funding live racing.

So in Saskatchewan you would think, well we would have a home market area for each one of our tracks where there's live horse racing. Curiously, the only home market area that exists right now is for the thoroughbred racing at Prairieland Park in Saskatoon. Their home market area happens to be the entire province of Saskatchewan. So that's the key to the problems facing the standardbred racing industry right now here in Saskatchewan, is this home market area is extended to the entire province for the thoroughbred portion or the thoroughbred portion of the industry.

So it's going to have a serious, serious impact on all the other raceways, including West Meadows here in Regina. And certainly I think if you've had the opportunity to speak to any standardbred racers, it's going to have a really serious impact on that industry.

What the industry proposed when the minister made the announcement was that you just draw a line at Davidson and you give the home market area for thoroughbred racing to the northern part of the province and the standardbred racing could have the home market area licence on the southern part of the province. So that was the plea, the urgent plea that was made to the minister by the standardbred racing association.

So let's fast-forward a little bit here. The bill was introduced in November. And then the folks from the standardbred racing started . . . Standardbred Horsemen's Association started to lobby the government for this distinction in the home market area.

We have a report here from last year. It's an article by a fellow named Calvin Daniels who's the assistant editor with *Yorkton This Week*, and he has some very serious concerns about this government's decision. And I'm just going to quote from one of the articles that I found on the Internet. He said he wanted to see a more united front in the lobby to save horse racing. And he said:

When you think about what racing means locally, it was [really] encouraging to see fans [from Yorkton] rally with a good crowd at the final day of racing . . . at Cornerstone Raceway in Yorkton [for the season]. The Yorkton Exhibition Association had been calling for a big crowd as a way to send a message to Wall and company [that's Premier Wall] that people here want racing to continue.

Unfortunately, some key local people who should have been out on the last day of racing to show their public support were not there.

The list included the mayor and council. The city owns the barns and grandstand utilized by the racers, and as a group, council should see the positives that racing brings to Yorkton.

Ditto the Yorkton Chamber of Commerce that should understand the flow of money through local restaurants, hotels, gas stations and other businesses. But the president was not present, nor . . . any visible representation . . .

He goes on to indicate that Tourism Yorkton wasn't there either. And he goes on say if people don't put together a united front for lobbying, horse racing as they know it will be gone. And here's another quote from him:

If they do not [lobby], and racing is dead, it will be a sad day in the province. Horse racing has been part of summers in Saskatchewan for decades and that heritage would be missed.

I, for one, would find empty barns at the Yorkton exhibition grounds a sad reminder of what the Wall government did in an attempt to save such a small amount of money, it won't make a ripple in the overall provincial budget.

So that's one journalist's commentary on the impact of this decision not to create a home market area for the standardbreds.

January 29th there was a post published in Standardbred Canada, and what they said is that they've got good news. The good news was that they would be allowed to have 10 days of harness racing in 2013. And President Glenn LeDrew said, "This is great news for our industry." And he went on to say, "Both tracks have dedicated tremendous effort to promote harness racing, and now they've been recognized for those efforts with live race date licenses issued by SLGA for 2013."

Here's the key quote. He goes on to say, "We are hoping our government also supports the industry by issuing home market area licenses for both tracks, so that harness racing continues to have a great future here." So that was January 29th of this year.

February 13th we got a letter here in our offices at the official opposition from the same president of the Saskatchewan Standardbred Horsemen's Association and he said, the amendments of the Bill No. 77 are fine as long as those, if you have a home market area where most of the taxable revenue comes from. So he says it's important to have a home market area; otherwise it would be meaningless. He says, "In reality the change in the Act will only benefit those tracks or industries

who have a home market area issued by SLGA.”

[16:30]

So that was on February 13th. Now fast-forward a week later, February 20th, and apparently there had been a meeting and there was an email that was sent from Mr. LeDrew indicating that Donna, the SLGA minister, will not be assigning a home market area to either of the standardbred tracks, Yorkton or West Meadows Raceway in Regina, effectively ending the 100-year history of harness racing here in Saskatchewan. And that’s the end of the story and that’s the end of the harness racing industry in Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, an innocent enough looking bill, one section being removed from *The Horse Racing Regulation Act* eliminating a tax, and this government is showing this to be a good thing. We’re eliminating a tax but without creating a home market area for the entire, or splitting the home market area to ensure that the standardbred tracks have that ability to derive revenue, it effectively kills the entire industry and I think that’s a shame and that’s something that this government needs to act upon now to change.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I will have further comments as I am the new critic for this area, and we’ll be questioning the minister more directly in committee so at that point that’s the extent of my comments on this bill.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Crown Investments that Bill No. 77, *The Horse Racing Regulation Amendment Act, 2012* be now read the second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this bill be referred? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — This bill stands referred to the Committee of Crown and Central Agencies.

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 member for Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise this afternoon and enter into the debate on Bill No. 78, *An Act to amend the Social Workers Act*. And it’s a relatively short one, and I understand that there’s a few areas of

importance that they just wanted to add in, and I’ll reflect on the minister’s remarks in a few minutes. And so it’s important though and I just want to take a moment and acknowledge the good work that social workers do. It’s important that we have professional social workers in our area, in our province, do work.

It’s interesting though that I found out that many of them actually work in the Ministry of Health. And actually people are surprised when they find out that it’s not in Social Services, but Health that most of our social workers . . . And because you have to be a part of the professional body, and you have to . . . and that’s an important criteria, and that’s not something that our Social Services department does as much as it should. And I’ve always called on them to really reflect on the fact we should have professional social workers working in Social Services much more. They provide important services, and I think this is something that we should strive for.

But having said that, the debate before us today is about allowing qualified clinical social workers to diagnose mental health disorders. And prior to 2002 they were allowed to do that. But because of the new Act in 2002, *The Psychologists Act*, that restricted diagnosis. Again, that fits the pattern though that most of our social workers, professional registered social workers, actually work in the area of health. And so that’s the situation.

But I think it is important that we can do all that we can to help people get resources to meet their needs if they are having mental health disorders. And so this would be something we should look at. And I know that there will be questions. This is not a straightforward one that we might consider it to be. There are different opinions about that and I will get to that in a minute.

The minister reflects on our capacity to do assessments and diagnosis, and mentions that there are only 78 psychologists and 36 psychiatrists working in Saskatchewan mental health outpatient services, and then there might be actually 50 social workers who would qualify to perform the diagnosis. And that would be interesting to know if they are working in . . . I would assume they are working in mental health outpatient services. It would be interesting to know the kind of area that they are working in. Apparently Alberta and British Columbia allows this to happen and it works very well — Ontario. And this is according to the minister’s comments themselves.

So the minister reflects on the fact “The Minister of Health has informed me that the wait times to see a psychiatrist in one of the regional health authorities can be as high as three to six months.” Now we’re not sure if that’s all the health regions or she’s highlighting one. We have to work on that for more information. She says, “This initiative is another example of . . . [the government’s] commitment to lowering the amount of time citizens have to wait for very important services.”

Now we do, as part of our commitment to do our work in opposition, we do consult with other organizations who may have some thoughts on this. And it is interesting that we did receive a letter from the Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association, and it’s dated February 27th, 2013 — not that long ago actually, just over a month. And the RPNAS [Registered

Psychiatric Nurses Association] has reviewed the proposed changes and has concerns. And what they say, the process used to decide upon the changes was not comprehensive and that the registered psychiatric nurses are the largest group of service providers in mental health in providing these services daily across the province.

And the minister hadn't referred to the RPNs [registered psychiatric nurse] in listing how many people there are to provide these services, and that they say they are aware of the issues regarding lack of access to services in a fragmented system. However they say, and I quote, "However, band-aiding with a profession which does not have the education is a dangerous precedent."

And for example, they don't have the diagnostic, medical, or pharmacological background.

And they go on to say, "Social workers diagnosing clients will not change the problems with access and lack of services."

And they would call . . . "And this is what we would call for, changes should be made as part of a comprehensive mental health strategy for the province involving all of those providing the services."

So clearly this is the cornerstone. This is the thing that we should be looking for — a comprehensive mental health strategy, and not band-aid solutions. And this is, I think, another example of this government with its faulty consultation processes. And really we need to talk about a comprehensive mental health strategy for the province. So I would say that I would agree with the RPNAS [Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association of Saskatchewan] when they call for this.

They also go on and talk about:

Diagnosing is a step towards prescribing medications and treatment, which requires that fundamental educational competencies exist in the area of medical education programs. We understand they would look at developing this education.

For psychiatric nurses, the educational competencies in medical education do not come with brief education training, but a comprehensive model which covers a time span of over two years with on-site experience in all medications, diagnostic formulations, and all the interactions that could occur. As well many psychiatric diagnosis have combination causative factors which we understand is not currently a requirement for social worker education.

"The SASW have indicated that they want to pursue prescribing as a function as well." And they note that "Proposed changes to the physician's legislation reference education and competency." And they go on to: "And to our knowledge up to this point, social workers are not officially considered health professionals in Saskatchewan."

So I think that's a powerful letter from one of the stakeholders that should've been consulted and were not. And we would have questions about why was the RPNAS not consulted about

this. And clearly they have a point of view, and the minister failed to acknowledge that in her comments. And while the goals are very worthwhile, that in fact we do want to see people get access to mental health services as quickly as possible, and that we understand there are challenges in this province, whether you're in a smaller, a smaller community, or rural and northern areas, that this provides challenges.

But we don't know where these 50 social workers live. Do they live in Saskatoon and Regina? One may be right over there who can actually do this work. Can you actually do this work? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Ready to go. But he's in Regina. Now we would be very happy to see him move to a rural or northern area. That would be a, that would not be a bad situation from our point of view.

But I don't know if it tips the balances of what we're really talking about here today, Mr. Speaker. We do have some concerns, and when the area of consultation comes up, that we do agree with the RAPNs, that really we do need a mental health, a comprehensive mental health strategy here in our province, and all stakeholders need to be consulted on that.

And we do think that, while there may be some historical trends prior to 2002 and the reaching back into the past for some solutions, we have concerns. And we do think that while there may be those who are able and eligible to qualify for this, clearly their concerns are pointed out that it's not only being diagnosed, it's also the follow-up.

And really we want to make sure that when we do the diagnosis that it is as strong as possible because we do know that people who have mental health disorders are reluctant. And it is totally understandable that whenever a physical health, a mental health disorder is diagnosed, you want to make sure it's spot-on, that it's right on because these things can be something that is here for life. And it can be most beneficial, but people have anxiety about stereotypes that go along with those kind of diagnosis. And while we have come a long way in terms of recognizing the positive benefits of diagnosis, we want to make sure, we absolutely do want to make sure that there is not unintended consequences of diagnosis, there is not unintended consequences of this kind of legislation.

And I think that we would go a long way, a long way towards helping people out if we had a comprehensive mental health strategy. And I think it's a common sense solution. Let's do that before we start applying band-aids to a circumstance. And many of us, absolutely many of us have the experience where we can see the benefits of appropriate diagnosis and the challenges of wait times.

But this to me, from what I can see, is not a fully thought-out solution. And so we'll have questions, we'll have questions about this. And I'm looking forward to hearing our critic talk more at length at this because she is a registered social worker and she will have some insight into this. And I know she wants to make the case that benefits all people here in Saskatchewan, that we don't do sloppy legislation and we pay for it further down the road.

But, as I say, I do have some concerns. And I know that there will be many of us who do want to speak to it, and we'll be

following this very, very closely, as it affects our constituents right across the province. And we want to see not only the ability to diagnose, and at this point we would question, what about prescribe? But we want to make sure there are resources there. It's one thing to be able to diagnose, but the resources are a big, big part of it.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I do want to move adjournment of Bill No. 78, *An Act to amend The Social Workers Act*. Thank you very much.

[16:45]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter debate here this afternoon as it relates to Bill No. 80, *The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2012*.

And I've gone through this bill. It does a few different things. It puts forward some clarifications as it relates to utilization of newer technologies, fibre optic lines. It talks about some of the changes that are being brought forward there, making sure that SaskPower can operate in the changing, evolving, modern, technological context. Certainly that's important.

It also brings forward changes as it relates to nuisance claims. And as I look at the changes around nuisance claims, I will be seeking further clarity as to why these changes are being made now. What this does is it provides SaskPower the same protection afforded to cities and municipalities from nuisance claims, and provides, as it says here:

The proposed exemption from a nuisance liability will protect SaskPower where it carries out its activities safely and responsibly and will allow it to avoid the high cost associated with even a successful defence of nuisance claims.

And now I want to just make sure I understand what has urged that change, and I want to ensure that there's a level of fairness back to Saskatchewan people. Who is it that's adjudicating what's safe and responsible behaviours by way of SaskPower? Certainly this may be a very reasonable change, but we do want to make sure that certainly this business, much like and just like so many other businesses in Saskatchewan, is required to respect the considerations of communities and of people and of residents, and making sure that this provides fairness through

that process. So what's causing this change now and why is an important question for us as we move forward. It must be a fair process, Mr. Speaker, and we will want to make sure that that's the case.

But as I look through this entire piece of legislation, what I see is the vast majority of it is based around borrowing limits that need to be raised for SaskPower. And certainly I'll get to some comments on that. What I do want to say is that SaskPower's such a valuable and vital Crown to the people of Saskatchewan, that we have some of the hardest working people in this province that have fulfilled their careers or have engaged in careers in this power corporation, fulfilling services to growing communities all across this province, and that they're so valuable not just to the place that they fulfilled in electrifying this province but to the future of Saskatchewan in the modern context that's referenced. And we need to do all we can to support the Saskatchewan SaskPower Corporation, and making sure that this Act allows them to continue to make the important investments across our province is something that we support.

But what we don't support is simply rubber-stamping borrowing to be transferred across for an irresponsible budget of this government, something we've seen far too often under this government, where it sees the Crown corporations as little more than a piggy bank to be drawn upon when their budget doesn't materialize in the fashion that they've laid out, put forward. They've put forward many budgets that have had poor economic, poor fiscal foundations that have of course caused deficits in the province of Saskatchewan, has caused increased debt, and has caused the raiding of SaskPower which comes at a consequence.

And I think of just a couple years ago, Mr. Speaker, just over a year ago, when this government had promised to SaskPower — just as they have here again this year, and in their annual report here today — that they wouldn't touch the dividends or the dollars of SaskPower. And of course that promise was broken by this government in the late months of the fiscal year. That government grabbed \$120 million from SaskPower at a time they could least afford it, Mr. Speaker, and transferred it across to general revenues. And of course the impact was felt directly by Saskatchewan people, ratepayers, families, and businesses who immediately or very shortly thereafter saw an increase of their rates to the tune of \$100 million to cover off for the reckless cash grab of that government just a few months before.

And it's that sort of behaviour, that sort of reckless management that has a direct impact on people, that we don't support. And that's why, when I look at this piece of legislation, if we were supporting SaskPower simply to be able to make the important investments that we require in a growing Saskatchewan to meet the needs of the technological changes that are occurring, then that would be one thing. But if we're rubber-stamping borrowing to transfer across dividends to this government that SaskPower can't afford, as we've seen in the past, a government that has drawn and raided the dollars of SaskPower, then that's something that we simply can't support, and we'll challenge government on every front as it relates to those irresponsible cash grabs.

You know our province has been well-served by a strong Crown sector. And the future of Saskatchewan will be

well-served by a thriving, strong private sector and a strong Crown sector. And it worries so many in this province to see the undermining and weakening of that Crown sector under that Sask Party government with deliberate actions to weaken and undermine their ability to be strong into the future, to fulfill the services that they must to the growing communities all across the province, and putting services at risk to the people of the province, of course, putting uncertainty into the lives of many workers as well, Mr. Speaker — all important considerations.

And you know the kind of economy that we believe in as New Democrats is one where you have that strong private sector, where you have that strong Crown sector. And it's disappointing to see this government abandon its promises around once suggesting they were going to somehow protect the Crowns and now of course breaking those promises, actually selling off a profitable dividend-paying Crown corporation in ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan], and directly undermining our entire Crown sector and certainly SaskPower, Mr. Speaker.

When I look at SaskPower, it's not just the raiding of those dollars that has had a direct impact on those operations and on the people of the province, it's also this ideological pursuit of contracting out at all costs. And we see that in new power generation where this government fails to lay the information on the table in a common sense way and make decisions in an even-handed fashion. They pursue that private generation, that private power at all costs. And of course we know that that's going to cost us far more, Mr. Speaker.

And when I speak of us, that's the families. That's the businesses all across our province, both now and certainly well into the future. And this is something that we need to . . . When we're looking at the nature of Saskatchewan people, Saskatchewan people are common sense; they're pragmatic, and they expect their government to be just the same. And this is a government that's tied the hands and weakened the Crown sector. And it seems to . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . It seems that I've got a little bit of excitement out of the member from Moose Jaw North. It's nice to see him enter into the debate from the floor of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

But what we should be talking about is the impact on the families in Moose Jaw who have had their bills forced with a significant increase as a direct result of the raiding of that power corporation's dollars, Mr. Speaker — \$120 million last year. And I had a bit of a kick out of the comments from the Minister of SaskPower here today who was standing on his feet and trying to defend raiding those dollars, who was trying to suggest it seemed that somehow those dollars, those revenues were covered off by higher hydro revenues, Mr. Speaker, and that the \$120 million were all these surplus dollars that SaskPower simply didn't know what to do with. And of course that's not the case, Mr. Speaker. The facts of the matter are that, although we had a higher water year in the year referenced by the minister here today, the revenues were nowhere close to \$120 million that were derived by way of hydro revenues. I believe it was closer to \$40 million. I don't believe it exceeded \$40 million. That's a fraction of what the minister seemed to be suggesting to this Assembly here today, Mr. Speaker. And I think what Saskatchewan people deserve are straight answers from that government. And certainly there was a direct

consequence of the dividend raid, the cash grab that we saw of that government through its broken promise not to take any dollars.

And so we get kind of . . . It seems to be a bit more of a charade, Mr. Speaker, when we see the annual report come out here again today and when we hear government claiming once again that they're not going to touch the dollars of SaskPower. Well, Mr. Speaker, they said that a couple of years ago, and of course they broke that promise and dipped directly back into the dollars of SaskPower and then asked the people of this province to pay for their inability to manage their finances, and a direct cost by way of a significant hike to the tune of \$100 million to power bills across this province, paid for by the hard-working families of this province, the hard-working business people of this province who are paying those utility bills.

We also see this Crown corporation and so many others weakened by the hamstringing with its so-called Sask-first policy, Mr. Speaker — just another example, Mr. Speaker, where this government has impeded the independent governance of those boards, has taken away the ability for those Crowns to operate in an independent fashion in the best interests of Saskatchewan people, to divest risk and to bring back benefits to Saskatchewan people.

So whether it's been the raiding of dollars from the Crown sector and from SaskPower, whether it's been the ideological pursuit of contracting out at all costs, only to cost Saskatchewan people more now and well into the future, tying the hands of this corporation and Saskatchewan people and governments into the future, or whether it's the lack of common sense around its so-called Sask-first policy that has hamstrung the independence of those Crown corporations, we see a government with a poor record as it relates to the proper stewardship of our Crown sector.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, this bill brings around some changes around nuisance claims. We want to make sure that the changes are in fact fair, respect the rights of communities and landowners and people, and making sure that we're understanding what's causing that change to be brought forward now. Why the change when it hasn't been in place for many, many years, affording them the same protections that municipalities and cities have had? And we also want to make sure that we understand the changes that are recommended to enhance technology throughout SaskPower. Those are important investments done with proper consultation.

But fundamentally, this is about raising the borrowing limit of SaskPower, something we won't simply rubber-stamp, because we've seen the history of this Sask Party government who's taken over \$2 billion from our Crown sector in just over five years, Mr. Speaker. And that's irresponsible. It's not sustainable. And we won't be rubber-stamping the automatic transfer of dividends that are going to be paid for with debt and by higher costs of Saskatchewan people into the future, Mr. Speaker.

So that's where we'll bring our voice to this piece of legislation. Of course we need to have proper stewardship of our Crown corporations. As New Democrats, we believe in a strong private sector. We believe as well in a strong Crown sector. We believe

that's what builds a modern economy and that's what we'll be standing strong for, Mr. Speaker.

With that being said, we look forward to further comments moving forward, but I've concluded the statements I wish to put on the record here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Minister of the Economy that Bill No. 80, *The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2012* be now read the second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. Second reading of this bill.

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

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this bill be referred? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — The bill stands referred to the committee of Crown and Central Agencies. I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — This House stands adjourned to 10 a.m. Thursday morning.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:59.]

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President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Bill Boyd

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Minister Responsible for The Global
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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
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