



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

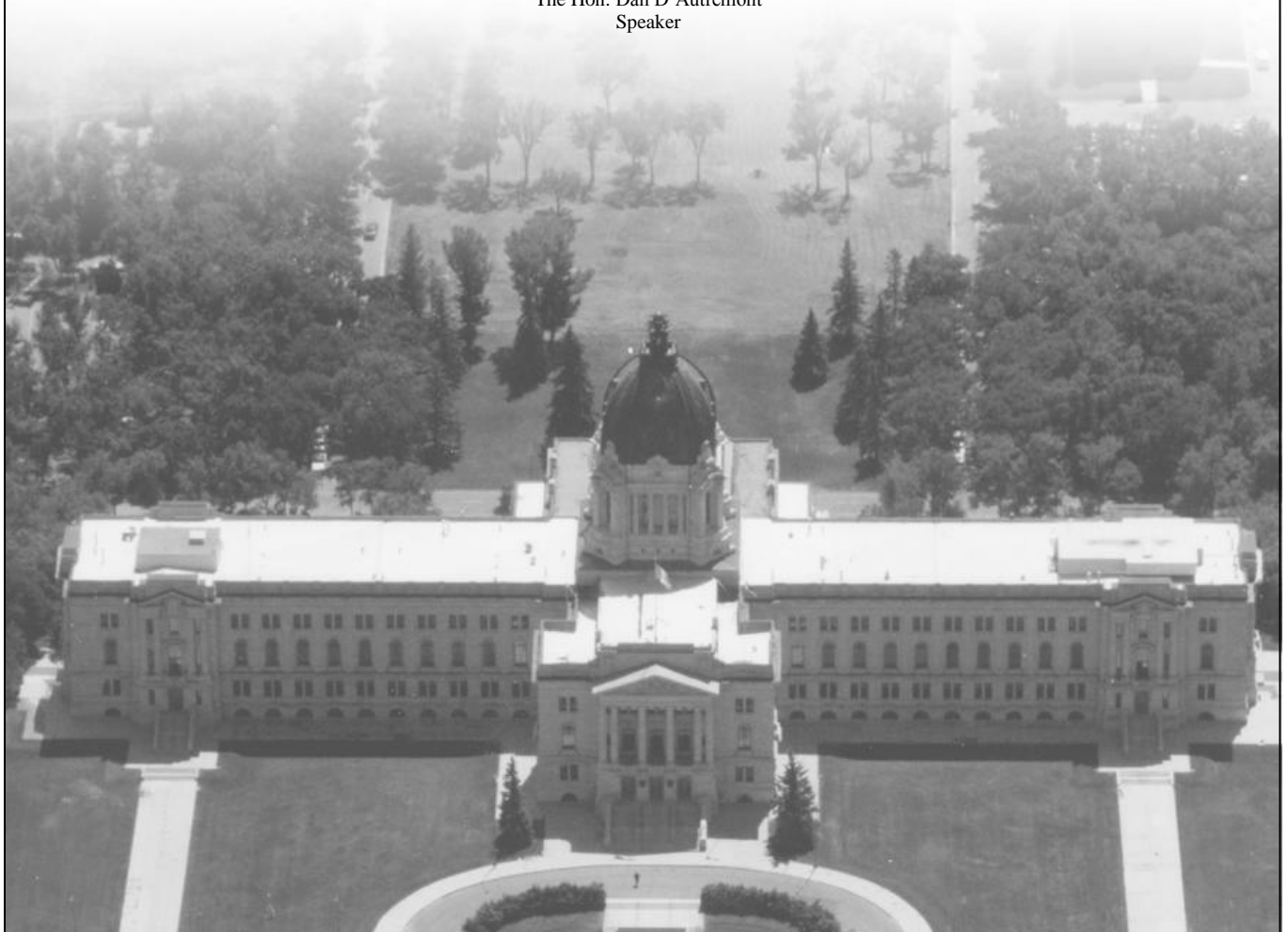
of the

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, 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, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Parent, Roger	SP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Phillips, Kevin	SP	Melfort
Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Sproule, Cathy	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Steinley, Warren	SP	Regina Walsh Acres
Stewart, Hon. Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Tochor, Corey	SP	Saskatoon Eastview
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Vermette, Doyle	NDP	Cumberland
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Hon. Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Hon. Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave of members of the Assembly for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — The Premier has asked leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues, for the leave. Just over a year ago, actually on the morning of the government's release of the growth plan in Saskatoon, a very good friend of mine, a friend of many people in this province, and a leader in the province of Saskatchewan, Randell Morris, passed away suddenly in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, Randell was at the time the president of the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, one of the finest technical schools you'll find anywhere in the country, frankly. And under Randell's leadership some very exciting things were happening then and continue today on that particular campus, not the least of which, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that Randell Morris, in working with the government, would often bring proposals to us for training and education for Aboriginal students, for First Nations and Métis students, and non-Aboriginal students. And Randell's proposal would always have a career on the other end of those proposals. He had partnerships with industry, and so he came with the request for funding. But his vision was always engagement in the economy; it was always a career. And, Mr. Speaker, so his loss remains a great loss to the province.

The good news is this: we have great leadership today at SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies] that are continuing in Randell's way, in his leadership. And, Mr. Speaker, we also have wonderful students at SIIT, and we want to welcome three students, scholarship winners in fact, to the Assembly.

I had the chance to say a few words at Randell's funeral, and prior to that to his wife Gayle and daughter Alex, and indicated that the government would like to fund and name, in his honour, a scholarship for students attending SIIT.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to welcome the first three recipients of the Randell Morris Scholarship who are seated in your gallery. And maybe they would just stand and give us a wave as I introduce them to members and to you. Clarissa Ballantyne is here, Laurie McAdam, Nadia Nichol. They're joined by the director of marketing and communications for SIIT as well, Robert Daniels.

Mr. Speaker, the scholarship is open to all full-time SIIT students from a single-parent family. And Gayle, Randell's wife, his widow, has helped develop this scholarship. And so she couldn't be with us here today, but we want to thank her for her input into the scholarship. We want to thank everyone — the faculty, the staff, and the students at SIIT who continue to do amazing work. And we want to especially wish these three students the very best in their studies. They will know that they are following in the footsteps and benefiting from the legacy of a great Saskatchewan leader. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Premier in welcoming this delegation of leadership and students from SIIT.

And the Premier very accurately captured the ongoing legacy that Randell Morris will have in Saskatchewan for SIIT, but for the entire province. And I would like to congratulate and commend the three women who are the recipients of this scholarship, to say, well done, and to say we look forward to your contributions that you will make to our province and what this scholarship and the path that you are pursuing will mean for your families and your communities. I want to commend you for your effort and thank you so much for coming here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce five great ladies from Yorkton — well, four from Yorkton, one from Ebenezer — in your gallery. They're ladies of the Yorkton chapter of the Red Hat Society or Scarlet Chapeau chapter from Yorkton.

With us today are the queen, Frances Mroczko. Give us a wave, Frances. There's Katherine Kuemper, but I know her better as Kay Kuemper; Lorraine Flunders, Kathy Reese, and Judy Lowe.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell members of the Assembly, if they're not familiar with the Red Hat Society, they're basically ladies of 50 years of age or over that are given a red hat at that age, and their basis is having a lot of fun, just sometimes being silly and having a lot of fun. I can tell the Assembly though that, knowing these ladies, their background goes far, much deeper than that. They're very involved in their communities, have been for years, continue to be just great contributors to the community, and very big, just very big people at giving back.

And I can tell you as well that I got to bring greetings at their annual convention here in Yorkton this past summer. And being only 49 at the time, I was given a pink hat because I couldn't have a red hat yet — pink and lavender. Today they awarded me a red hat, Mr. Speaker. They came to visit me today here. And I'm just so blessed to have them and know them and just have really good guidance from them back at home. So I would ask all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the other members of the Legislative Assembly 65 grade 10 students from Winston Knoll here in Regina. Mr. Speaker, they are accompanied by their teacher, Ms. Michelle McKillop, Ms. Kim Lawrence, and Ms. Vonnie Schmidt.

Their teacher, Ms. McKillop, has been very diligent in bringing her grade 10 social science class to the Legislative Assembly. So it's a real pleasure to have them again. Their class is here so welcome to all of them, and I think they're going to enjoy the Legislative Assembly today. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the members of the Legislative Assembly, I have the honour to introduce four guests that are seated in your gallery. I'll begin with the two who are my constituents from the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency. Joining us are Kim Reeve — maybe have Kim give us a wave, stand — and Tanya Kwochka.

And they are joined by two young ladies who are visiting Saskatchewan and staying in Saskatchewan on an exchange, Mr. Speaker, and they're from Quebec, the province of Quebec. They are Emma Halley-Nadeau, and Emma is from Saint-Remi-de-Tingwick and she goes to school at École secondaire Monique-Proulx. And so that's Emma, and I think she already gave a wave. And Lydia Trudel is from Quebec City. She attends school at Courville. I hope I said that right.

Mr. Speaker, they're going to be staying with Kim's family and Tanya's family while they're in Weyburn on an exchange. And I believe in February, Kim and Tanya both have daughters who will be going to Quebec on their part of the exchange. And so they're here in the city to tour the legislature, to observe some of the proceedings, and do some other fun stuff while they're in the city. And so I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you and to all members of the Legislative Assembly, I would like to, in the west gallery, introduce a good friend of mine who is originally from the Carrot River Valley, or originally from Carrot River, is Bill Gowen.

Mr. Speaker, Bill Gowen moved to Saskatoon I guess so he didn't have to put up with me being his MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] anymore. However his ... I was honoured, honoured last summer on July 1st to give his mother the Premier's award of excellence, Mr. Speaker.

Bertha Gowen did a lot of work in our constituency and did a lot of volunteerism. Bill's following the same trait; he's a very good person. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I also had the privilege of giving the eulogy at Bertha's funeral on Saturday.

And I feel bad about that because we lost a great member of our community. So I would like everybody to welcome Bill to his Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I too would like to join with the member from Carrot River and welcome Mr. Gowen to the Assembly. As his new MLA, I'm pleased to see that he's moving up in the world. And I've had a lot of that type of growth in my constituency from Silver Springs and other constituencies around the city and would like to welcome him to the finest constituency in the province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I would like to remind members not to bring other members into disrepute.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of anti-bullying initiatives. And we know that bullying causes serious harm, and the consequences of bullying are devastating, including depression, self-harm, addictions, and suicide. And we know other provinces have brought forward legislation and various tools and programs showing swift and effective government action. And we know that this government is not doing enough to protect Saskatchewan youth. 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:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on this government to take immediate and meaningful action to protect Saskatchewan's children from bullying because the lives of young people are at stake and this government must do more to protect our youth.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition. Many northern residents benefit from the rental purchase option program, also known as RPO. These families are very proud homeowners in their community. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly cause the Sask Party government to restore the RPO rent-to-own option for responsible renters in northern Saskatchewan, allowing them the dignity of owning their own homes and building community in our province's beautiful North.

It is signed by many northern residents. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition in support of replacing the gym at Sacred Heart Community School.

The petitioners bring to the Assembly's attention the following: that the gym at Sacred Heart Community School in north central Regina is now quite literally falling apart and has been closed indefinitely, no longer being safe for students or staff. While there's a temporary solution that has been reached — refurbishing the sanctuary of the old Sacred Heart Church — the desire is for a permanent solution.

The petitioners point out that Sacred Heart Community School is the largest school in north central Regina, with 450-plus students, 75 per cent of whom are First Nations and Métis. They point out that enrolment has increased steadily and has increased by 100 students over the past four years, and that attendance and learning outcomes are steadily improving as well. And they point out that as a matter of basic fairness and common sense, Sacred Heart Community School needs a gym.

In the prayer that reads as follows:

The petitioners respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause this government to immediately replace the gymnasium of Sacred Heart Community School.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by good citizens of Buchanan, North Battleford, and Kindersley. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

First Nations Youth Summit

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, this morning I had the privilege of attending the Assembly of First Nations Youth Summit on Treaty 6 territory in Saskatoon. I thank the hosts, Montreal Lake Cree Nation, and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, for the invitation and the opportunity to bring greetings. It was inspiring to see a young crowd of First Nations leaders from across Saskatchewan and from all over Canada gathered together focused on what matters.

It was an honour to be there, Mr. Speaker, but as I said to them this morning, the true measure of our commitment to our shared futures is not whether we show up at events. Rather the true measure of our commitment to our shared futures is what we actually do. It's whether we seek to bring people and communities together or whether we choose to exploit division and misunderstanding. It's whether we extend opportunity to more and more people or whether we put up barriers. It's whether we speak out against racism or don't pay attention to it or, even worse, play a role in it. Those are the real measures of our commitment to our shared futures. Those are also the real measures of our commitment to building a stronger Saskatchewan and a better Canada for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating all those involved in the AFN [Assembly of First Nations] Youth Summit and thanking them for their leadership here in Saskatchewan and all over Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[13:45]

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

Global Petroleum Survey Results

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the recently released annual global petroleum survey. The annual report done by the Fraser Institute surveys petroleum industry executives and managers regarding the competitiveness and barriers in oil- and gas-producing jurisdictions worldwide. I am happy to report that the survey ranks Saskatchewan as having the best policies in Canada for attracting investment in oil and gas.

Mr. Speaker, you might be asking, what did Saskatchewan rank worldwide? Well out of 157 jurisdictions, our province was the third best jurisdiction in the world to invest.

Industry has shown its confidence in our province as we continue to offer stable and competitive resource royalties. And the evidence is in the numbers. Last year, Mr. Speaker, we produced over 172 million barrels of crude oil. We drilled a record number of horizontal wells. Industry has also made new investments in our oil sands and oil shale. More directly, there are over 34,000 people working in Saskatchewan's oil and gas industry.

Saskatchewan's recent growth has been aided by the investments made in oil and gas. With over 47.8 billion barrels of initial crude oil in place, we look forward to many more years of oil production in our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

India Canada Association Supper Night

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to recognize the good work of the India Canada Association of Saskatchewan. ICA [India Canada Association] is a non-profit dedicated to promoting Indian culture and multiculturalism.

The ICA held its 32nd annual supper night on October 5th this year. The fundraising event includes lively Indian entertainment and incredible cuisine. Stephanie and I were pleased to attend the sold-out event once again and were called upon to show off our Bollywood dance moves or, in my case, lack thereof.

The ICA recognizes the supper night would not be possible without the commitment of sponsors, special guests, volunteers, and venue staff. I'd like to thank the dinner's Chair, Ms. Renu Kapoor, as well as MCs [master of ceremonies] Lorie Lindsay and J.C. Garden.

This year's event was stellar and raised more than \$58,000. The funds will be donated to and support the good work of Big

Brothers of Regina.

I'd like to extend a special thanks to the India Canada Association of Saskatchewan, the event organizers, for continuing to raise cultural awareness through their charitable work. The ICA has raised \$550,000 for community causes over the years. I ask all members of this Assembly to join with me in recognizing the remarkable community leadership of the India Canada Association and all those involved in making this year's India night gala another huge success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saskatchewan Addictions Awareness Week

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. November 18th to 24th is Saskatchewan Addictions Awareness Week, which coincides with National Addictions Awareness Week. Each year this is an opportunity to remind people about addiction issues and the assistance available throughout our province by supporting healthy lifestyles and reducing the risk of use of alcohol and drugs.

This year's awareness campaign targets the misperception that drinking and doing drugs is just a social activity. In fact what appears to be just doing a bad habit can easily become a harmful addiction in disguise.

Mr. Speaker, our government provides addiction services in every health region. One example of this is the new in-patient family treatment centre located in Prince Albert, which is complete with an on-site child care service. This centre provides treatment for women with young children who experience child care as a barrier to addiction treatment.

We are also supporting projects like Youth Action for Prevention to help people encourage their peers to choose healthy lifestyles. We also have enhanced the work to prevent fetal alcohol spectrum disorder with improved diagnosis, assessment, and community support. In addition the cross-ministry mental health and addictions action plan, which has already had more than 2,000 people offer their input online . . . This will help guide our long-term plans for preventing and dealing with addictions.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize all the tremendous work that is happening across Saskatchewan. Our government wants to thank those who work in the addiction field and their ongoing efforts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Saskatoon Partners Win Arts Award

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For the second consecutive year, a Saskatchewan partnership has won the artsVest Outstanding Partnership Award. Saskatoon-based PAVED Arts, the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra, and Affinity Credit Union were recognized for their innovative initiative at the Business of Arts Awards gala held last Friday evening in Toronto.

The Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra served a large audience of music lovers, and PAVED Arts is a non-profit, artistic-run centre for contemporary media arts. The core series of a two-part concert series that took place during the 2012-2013 season . . . The Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra performed contemporary sound pieces by local and international composers, accompanied by video arts specifically selected for each piece and produced by PAVED artists. Affinity Credit Union came on board as the presenting sponsor.

Mr. Speaker, this is a really good example of how artsVest program works. Business and organizations come together to support the arts and culture in communities around the province. In the program's first two years, a total of 421 business partnerships were established. This resulted in more than 2.4 million in supports for the arts and culture sector and brought money into local economies. That is why this May, artsVest Saskatchewan was extended for another two years with renewed federal and provincial funding.

I ask all members to join with me in congratulating PAVED Arts, the Saskatoon Symphony, and Affinity Credit Union on their award-winning partnership. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Police Officer Retires After 29 Years of Service

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the Assembly today to recognize the career of an accomplished RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] officer and friend of mine, Sergeant James Morton.

Earlier this month, I had the pleasure of attending the retirement service for Sergeant Morton who left the RCMP after 29 years of service. And I can tell you, at the retirement ceremony there was some talk about his tactical takedown technique, and I can personally attest to witnessing it at one point in my past at a party. So it's very effective.

James proudly worked in Saskatchewan for the entire duration of his career where he strived to serve and protect the citizens of our great province and country. His work with the RCMP included organizing and facilitating RCMP courses and working with various integrated drug units. And at the time of his retirement, he was a sergeant with the RCMP general investigation services.

Highlights of his career include being a team commander and being in charge of the medal security for the medals plaza at the Vancouver Olympics and media centre and captain of one of the tactical vessels at the G20 summit in Toronto.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to his work, James is passionate about giving back to the community as a volunteer. He has been involved with several community organizations, including Kinsmen and Special Olympics. He has also coached minor hockey and taught water safety and small vessels operators courses to the public.

While he has retired from the RCMP, he has not left the work world altogether. He is now the sheriff and local registrar at the

local Court of Queen's Bench in Yorkton.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in recognizing the accomplishment of the career of Sergeant James Morton and wish him the best with his future endeavours. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

A Plan for Agriculture

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition likes to talk about putting more eggs in more baskets. Supposedly this is the foundation of his smart plan. No one would know though because no one has seen this imaginary plan.

What we do know is that his smart growth plan doesn't include the most important basket, our bread basket, agriculture. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition didn't even bother to mention agriculture in his Throne Speech reply, even though Saskatchewan exported a record 11.2 billion in agriculture exports in 2012, leading the country for the second straight year, and even though our agriculture exports account for one-third of all the exports from Saskatchewan and even though our producers just harvested what is to be expected a record crop.

Mr. Speaker, our government believes that the best indicator of future behaviour is past behaviour. And because the Leader of the Opposition doesn't have a plan, we can only assume that his plan for agriculture is the past plan of the NDP [New Democratic Party].

Mr. Speaker, we know what that plan did. That plan tore up GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] contracts, increased crop insurance premiums while decreasing coverage, and closed 31 ag offices in rural Saskatchewan. The member from Regina Lakeview, a former NDP leader, even stated he would take money from municipalities and the agriculture initiatives to support other priorities.

Mr. Speaker, our government has a plan which includes increasing crop production by 12 million tonnes by 2020, record investments in ag research, and increasing the value of agriculture exports from 10 billion to 15 billion by 2020. Mr. Speaker, our farmers deserve to know where the NDP stands.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Funding for Care Facilities

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been 20 days since the deadline passed for health regions to submit business cases in order to access this government's one-time payment fund for seniors' care facilities. Can the Premier tell us the total cost of the requests submitted by all health regions?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is correct. It was, I believe, October 20th in fact when we released the results of the province-wide review of long-term care facilities in this province, the first of its kind, Mr. Speaker. That's when we also indicated that the government had allocated \$10 million for an Urgent Issues Action Fund, Mr. Speaker.

What we told health regions is take the time through the month of October, Mr. Speaker, to put forward business plans, identify what those urgent issues that they believe a portion of the 10 million could identify, Mr. Speaker. What I also indicated is that we would take the month of November to identify those projects, prioritize them, determine which ones we could fund. And we look forward, Mr. Speaker, to allocating the funding in early December, but we are still evaluating the proposals at this time.

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

Mr. Broten: — The question to the Premier was, what's the total cost of the requests submitted by the health regions?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, we would take the month of November to evaluate the proposals. And, Mr. Speaker, from the proposals that have been coming in, some would have specific requests in terms of perhaps an updated WanderGuard system that would have an identified dollar amount, Mr. Speaker. Others would be more general in terms of the requests that they would be looking for and wouldn't necessarily have a dollar amount attached to them, Mr. Speaker. We are evaluating those proposals, Mr. Speaker, in this month, and that will be continuing for the remainder of this month, and then awarding the dollars in December, as I have stated previously.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the dollars for this one-time payment fund are set to roll out in about a couple weeks, so surely the ministry has done the analysis on these requests from the health regions.

We've already heard, Mr. Speaker, that health regions are concerned about the amount of funding they will actually receive from this one-time fund for care facilities. My question to the Premier: can he outline how much was requested by each of the 12 health regions?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — As I said in my previous response, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health is looking at all of the proposals as they came in. Some would have clear identified dollars attached to them, others would have a general direction in terms of where they would access money, Mr. Speaker, without a direct dollar amount attached to them. We are evaluating, as the Ministry of Health we are doing our due diligence in terms of evaluation of the requests, Mr. Speaker. We'll be prioritizing them, determining which ones we can fund within the \$10 million request, and allocating those dollars in December, Mr.

Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, last week we brought forward concerns from the Saskatoon Convalescent Home about a call button system that was not working. The Health minister acknowledged that this was one of the proposals put forward from this one-time payment fund, Mr. Speaker, to address a faulty call button system at the Convalescent Home.

What I've heard from Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, is that they simply cannot understand why it is that care facilities have to make a business case for something as essential as a call button system. This is about patient safety. This is about patient dignity, Mr. Speaker. This shouldn't be about the bottom line.

My question to the Premier: how many other care facilities have had to put forward business cases for something as vital as a call button system?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, when you look at the record of this government over six years, in the first six years of our government, the members well know that we have spent \$1 billion in health care capital, Mr. Speaker, knowing that there is much more work to be done.

Mr. Speaker, we would have a far different situation in this province in terms of the health capital and the state of some of the health capital in this province, Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite had spent more than \$300 million in their last six years of government. A billion dollars on this side of the House, \$300 million on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there were years that went by in the NDP government where there were zero dollars attached to maintenance, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have funded in fact in this government, in one of, I believe, our first year of government, \$100 million in health capital maintenance, Mr. Speaker — unprecedented in this province. It's a shame, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite didn't do the same type of investment.

[14:00]

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, this government is supposedly going to be rolling out dollars from a one-time payment fund in about two weeks, but this government is unable to say how much was actually requested from health regions, unable to say how much from each health region they're asking for for things for care facilities, Mr. Speaker.

We know that the CEO [chief executive officer] tour identified many problems with lifts and ceiling tracks. Again having proper lifts and ceiling tracks, Mr. Speaker, is about patient safety and it's about patient dignity. It shouldn't be about a bottom line of a business case, but this government, Mr. Speaker, is forcing care facilities to make a business case for such things.

Can the Premier tell us how many care facilities have had to put forward business cases for something as vital as lifts and ceiling tracks?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it has always been the practice with health regions, including when members opposite were the government, it's always been the case that health regions are going to back up their requests for funding with a case. They will make the case for specific requests of the government. That is exactly what's happening here. The government's responded to a need here in terms of the urgent requirement for \$10 million of additional funds and also some mid- and long-term measures, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to continue to do that analysis and continue to provide the health care that Saskatchewan people deserve. I wonder if members can . . . The Leader of the Opposition might want to share with this Assembly what kind of business case went into closing 52 hospitals, Mr. Speaker? What kind of business case did the NDP do when they shut down the Plains hospital, which today causes trouble in the ERs [emergency room] in this city?

I'll tell you what the business case was under the NDP. They said closing the Plains hospital would save \$10 million on the budget. Mr. Speaker, we've saved twice that leaning out blood inventory management. This government will continue to put a priority on health care capital, on ensuring that we're doing health care capital maintenance in this province, unlike what members opposite did in those long, long, dark years of NDP government, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, here we have a government that it likes to talk about being ready for growth, but once again, Mr. Speaker, we have a Premier come into the Chamber and ready for excuses, Mr. Speaker.

They're rolling out dollars supposedly in a couple of weeks for care facilities, but they're unable to tell us how much was actually requested in total, unable to tell us how much each health region is asking for, Mr. Speaker. It's not just call buttons. It's not just lifts. It's not just ceiling tracks, Mr. Speaker, where we're having problems with care facilities. CEOs have identified that bathtubs are aging or obsolete and need to be replaced. Having proper bathtubs in care facilities, Mr. Speaker, is essential. It's about patient safety. It's about patient dignity. So Saskatchewan people are confused, Mr. Speaker, when care facilities have to make a business case in order to have a proper bathtub in the facility.

My question to the Premier: can he tell us how many facilities have had to put forward business cases for something as important as proper bathtubs?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we're talking about dollars over and above the allocated budget. We're talking about funding beyond what was budgeted for any of these institutions

by the regions. So we know there are a number of needs in a number of the regions in a number of the care facilities. They're going to make their case to the regions, and in this case to the government, for additional funds, Mr. Speaker. And when they do, when they make that case . . . And by the way, this is exactly the same process that members opposite used for any additional funds over and above what they would have budgeted, the same thing notwithstanding the Leader of the Opposition's shock about it all. It's precisely what they did.

Mr. Speaker, here's some more facts that he should be more surprised about. In our first six years of government, the Saskatchewan Party government invested \$1 billion in health care capital. We're opening long-term care facilities. They closed long-term care beds. We're opening hospitals in communities across this province, Mr. Speaker. They only announced the hospitals. We had to actually fund them and do the opening. A billion dollars in our first six years versus 300 million in their last six years. Mr. Speaker, there's more work to do, but I think the people of the province understand which side is ready for growth and ready as for what's needed in the health care system, Mr. Speaker.

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

Access to Emergency Rooms

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, a Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians report released yesterday is of particular interest to Saskatchewan. It says that overcrowding problems in emergency rooms is not just a matter of inconvenience, it's a public health emergency. I'll read from that report's conclusion, Mr. Speaker: "Crowded EDs are associated with poor outcomes including increased mortality for patients seen during crowded periods."

To the minister: what is this government doing to address the bottleneck in Saskatchewan's emergency rooms?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, what that report also mentions, and what was highlighted on the front page of the *Leader-Post* this morning from the individual from the CAEP [Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians] who spoke to the *Leader-Post*, is that this has been a problem growing for 20 years.

Mr. Speaker, we will look at the recommendations very carefully. Mr. Speaker, we know that today in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert, in the last year, 250,000 people attended to the emergency room, Mr. Speaker. We know that in the city of Regina, for example as estimated by the region, that 15 to 20 per cent of those individuals don't in fact have an emergency situation.

Mr. Speaker, that's why we're doing things like the innovation site at the Meadow Primary Health clinic to expand the hours, to extend the hours, to give people another option, Mr. Speaker. That's why we've announced the hot-spotting in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, where we know that those high-use individuals are using ERs, Mr. Speaker, rather than other

services. We're going to take services to them. And that's why we've invested in Home First/Quick Response in this city, in Saskatoon, and in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker, to help divert some of those seniors from emergency rooms who don't necessarily need emergency services.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, here's what Dr. Andrew Affleck, a co-author of the report says:

If you have significant overcrowding in your emergency department, then there is an effect on the retention of physicians . . . Every day, if you go to work and you're struggling to find a stretcher to see a patient over and over again because it's blocked by an inpatient waiting to go the floor, it grinds on you and it is a retention issue.

Mr. Speaker, we don't just have a recruitment problem, we also have a retention problem. And overcrowding is making retention even more difficult. To the minister: instead of just being ready for excuses, when will this government be ready to address overcrowding in emergency rooms?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think in my previous answer I think I've pointed out some of the actions that the government is taking with hot-spotting, with Home First/Quick Response, Mr. Speaker, with the fact that Regina Qu'Appelle since 2008 has opened up 19 per cent more acute care beds, Mr. Speaker, in this city. With the fact that in the last year bed blockers, those who are waiting for either placement in long-term care or some other services within the community, Mr. Speaker, Regina Qu'Appelle has reduced that number by 24 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we've introduced the Allscripts system within Regina and Saskatoon to help with the patient flow, Mr. Speaker, from emergency to acute, and then out from their discharge, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why we have taken what I think is an unprecedented action, Mr. Speaker, signified by a meeting last week, two days, which the emergency doctors, not only from Regina but also those that represent their national board, took place . . . a meeting took place in Saskatoon where we are starting to plan out how do we deliver no waits in the emergency rooms by 2017, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're not afraid to set bold goals, which you will find here in Saskatchewan and not anywhere else in this country.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Tuition Levels and Support for Post-Secondary Education

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Students and families are concerned about the cost of post-secondary education. And that's not surprising because Statistics Canada tells us Saskatchewan students pay the second-highest level of tuition in the country. Of course we know the Premier has actually argued this point with reporters. In August the Premier said:

Just a correction. I've heard this in some of the media since the StatsCan numbers came out. Tuition in Saskatchewan is not the second highest in Canada. The tuition increase that some of the universities had for year-over-year is probably in that range, but tuition levels.

To the Minister of Post-Secondary Education: leaving aside that the Premier chose to disregard the facts from Stats Canada, can the government confirm that Saskatchewan students pay the second-highest level of tuition in Canada?

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, thanks very much for the opportunity to speak about the significance of post-secondary education and especially about affordability for Saskatchewan students.

Mr. Speaker, to my hon. friend across, I of course would have some, some challenges for him on the premise. In fact when we think about the investments that we've put forward, more than \$4.6 billion in post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker, we can think of some of the most significant student supports across the country. In fact just this year there's \$117 million, making sure that students have more affordable, more accessible, and excellent post-secondary education.

As far as answering directly to the question, Mr. Speaker. I would just simply say that students at Dalhousie in the University of New Brunswick, University of Waterloo, Queen's University, University of Toronto, York University, University of Guelph, University of Ottawa, Carlton University, university of western Ontario, McMaster University, University of Windsor, and University of Calgary would all generally have much higher tuition, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Interesting, Mr. Speaker. The minister didn't answer the question, but we'll carry on in hope, Mr. Speaker.

In 2007, using the same annual report from Statistics Canada, the then Sask Party Finance critic said the tuition should be reduced. He said — the member from Silver Springs and the minister's got him right in front; there's somebody will be able to clear this up with him — he said, "National average at the very least, that should be our goal." But we've seen tuition increases, and we now have the second-highest level of tuition in Canada. And despite being more, students are getting less.

This government has mismanaged the post-secondary sector: the Carlton Trail — St. Peter's merger scandal, the probation once again at the College of Medicine; \$100 million of debt pushed from the province's books onto the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] books; the funding crunch at universities which continue to force layoffs of staff, the sale of assets, which at the University of Saskatchewan included the sale of sheep.

To the minister: why should students be paying more and getting less?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced

Education.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what we know at both the University of Saskatchewan and in the University of Regina is that under the NDP, things were considerably more challenging than anything that students could envision. In fact, Mr. Speaker, between 1991 and 2007, under the NDP at the University of Saskatchewan, tuition increased by 175 per cent. Mr. Speaker, 175 per cent. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, again between 1991 and 2007, undergraduate tuition increased at the University of Regina by 144 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what we've done is put in place a number of innovative, in fact very, very important initiatives to make sure that students have greater access, Mr. Speaker, and that they're maintaining their focus on excellent programs. For example the graduate retention program, Mr. Speaker, the graduate retention program where there are now 40,000 graduates participating in and benefiting from the graduate retention program, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite might have been familiar with 40,000 Saskatchewan graduates in the past, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Next question. I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again we see a government not ready for growth but ready for excuses. Although in this case, it turns out they were ready for growth — growth in tuition, Mr. Speaker, with Saskatchewan now having the second-highest level of tuition in all of Canada. That's not what they promised in 2007, and they certainly didn't talk about it in their election in 2011.

Students and parents and university staff and professors that I've spoken with are confused and frustrated when they see this government's self-congratulatory advertisements. They're recently spending \$54,000 on spin and PR [public relations] about their record in post-secondary education, and the bill continues to rack up as we speak.

Students and parents are confused and frustrated because those ads don't match the reality they're experiencing on campus — the second-highest level of tuition in the entire country, layoffs, cutbacks, and program reviews. To the minister: why is this government spending \$54,000 in self-promotion when our universities are under such duress?

[14:15]

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Once again, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to make sure that the member opposite is familiar with this own record before we address the question directly.

Mr. Speaker, what we saw under the NDP, Mr. Speaker, were real cuts to post-secondary educational budgets. In the early 1990s, minus 2.5, minus 4 per cent, Mr. Speaker. And the years were bleak, Mr. Speaker, the years were bleak not simply on funding because the graduates, Mr. Speaker, would then leave

the province.

Mr. Speaker, as I've just said, what we've seen under this government is a number of initiatives like the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship where 4,500 graduates out of high school are now participating in and able to benefit from this increased access to post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, what we can talk about is, between 1991 and 2007, the University of Saskatchewan students faced a 175 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's so much good news to talk about post-secondary education, I'm afraid the member opposite is missing the big story: more opportunities for Saskatchewan students right here.

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

Crime Prevention Measures

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the community of North Battleford has concerns about crime. The issue has generated national media attention and over 1,000 concerned citizens have joined a local Facebook group to speak out about this.

We know that the North Battleford mayor and city manager requested three things when they met with the Minister of Policing. The community has asked for more RCMP officers, more community service officers, and more resources for the Hub initiative.

We appreciate that the government met with the representatives of North Battleford, but we haven't heard specific commitments to address this very immediate and serious problem. To the Minister of Policing: is there an action plan to follow up on the three specific requests from North Battleford?

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of our growth agenda, this government is committed to safety in our communities. Speaking specifically about North Battleford, Mr. Speaker, we met with the mayor and city manager and the MLA for North Battleford, the Minister of Justice and myself. We are trying to get together an analysis of really what's happening in this community.

But I'm going to speak briefly about some of the things that this government has done in relation to crime prevention. 2007, our election promise of 120 additional police officers across the province. And I'm just going to speak, you know, Mr. Speaker, and I'll speak later about this, about what the NDP failed to do in relation to hiring and making a promise and failing to hire the police officers necessary. I'm going to speak about the COR and Hub that's coming out of Prince Albert that is being replicated in communities like North Battleford.

Mr. Speaker, we need some time to get this together. The community is working with us, and we will continue with this progress. Thank you.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the minister heard this exact plea back in May. And at that time she told the community, "We would encourage the committee to put a business case together and explain their needs."

The crime reports for this community fill the local paper. The RCMP officers responded to a hundred calls on the last reported weekend alone. There are more victims of crime in that city every day. I would consider this not a matter for business case development. I would think this is a case where the government should take quick, decisive action to support the community and reduce crime.

To the Minister of Policing: will she consider the high incidents of reported crime to be the most compelling business case and step in to support North Battleford's community safety efforts right now?

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Mr. Speaker, our efforts to reduce crime and ensure community safety are working. We have the Hub program coming out of North Battleford. It's only been in place for a very short period of time, Mr. Speaker. 2012, the crime rate was down by 7 per cent and the severity of crime was down by 4 per cent in Saskatchewan compared to 2011, Mr. Speaker.

We acknowledge that the crime rates in the province are too high and we are working diligently to try and reduce them, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about the promise. And here the members opposite talk about hiring more police officers. Mr. Speaker, we promised 120. We delivered 120. They promised 120, Mr. Speaker. They delivered nothing, Mr. Speaker.

So again promise made, promise kept. I promised and we're working towards helping the community of North Battleford. We will continue with this progress and working with the community, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, what's clear is that the community and the police are doing their part. The community needs this government to allocate resources they've asked for as quickly as possible. They need to get to some of the grassroots of this situation because they need to address crime and prevent crime by addressing grassroots.

Mr. Speaker, here's what Councillor Bater from North Battleford says:

So if the provincial minister is suggesting that we have to look at a long term strategy, I would suggest back that all those areas are provincial responsibilities, with social services, education, health — something we need to keep pressing on.

Councillor Bater is right. The provincial government has a lot of responsibility on these important issues in order to help prevent crime from happening in the first place. To the Minister of Policing: will the province's response to crime in North Battleford include changes to social services, education, and

health care, and will they contact the federal government to make sure that they are part of this solution as well?

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm going to mention to the member opposite, if he isn't aware of the fact, that we have a child and family committee that incorporates Policing, Justice, Education, Social Services, and Health, Mr. Speaker. We are working to try and address some of these children and families that are at risk, Mr. Speaker. We understand the components. We understand the necessity for looking into these particular issues and working together as a government.

Now let's just talk about what the NDP did. From 1996 to 2006, Mr. Speaker, our national crime rate dropped by 11 per cent. During that same time period, crime in Saskatchewan increased by 17 per cent. We'll take no lessons from the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. Crime was increasing at the time that they were in power and they did virtually nothing. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 112

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Krawetz that **Bill No. 112** — *The Accounting Profession Act* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak about this bill relating to the accounting profession. And we know that the government has brought it forward again because there is some urgency in getting this bill passed to meet some of the timelines of the three accounting professions that have come forward with this recommendation to the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, what we have here is the result of many, many years of discussion between the chartered accountants, the certified general accountants, and the certified management accounts and their professional bodies that regulate their industry. And, Mr. Speaker, what we have is the new designation that is going to work for these organizations here in Saskatchewan and across many jurisdictions across Canada. And what we understand is that there have been some very long and serious discussions about the kinds of changes that need to be made to make sure that the qualifications of the individuals doing the work will meet a common standard right across the board.

Now what I would say, Mr. Speaker, as a member of this legislature who has worked with all three of the professional designations — the chartered accountants, the certified

management accountants, and the certified general accountants — that they all have provided very good advice, whether they're working within the civil service, whether they're working in private practice, or whether they're working in corporate structures, as it relates to the accountability issues of all of the work that we do at the legislature.

Now we know over the years that chartered accountants have been the main category of people who have been selected to be the Provincial Auditor. And one of my questions for the Premier and for the Minister of Finance is whether they will listen more carefully to a provincial auditor if they're a certified management accountant or a certified general accountant than they have been listening to just a certified accountant. Because we know that there's a whole number of issues where the Provincial Auditor, who basically is one of the . . . in that position, they hold one of the top accounting positions in the province, where they have not been listened to. And so, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure this legislation will deal with that, but it will deal with the fact that we want to have the best professional people we can to provide advice to us, especially advice to the legislature.

So as we move forward with this particular legislation, we need to understand what it is that is happening with the profession. And I think that the pressures that have come across all of the accounting professions that are now coming together in this Institute of Chartered Professional Accountants or CPAs [chartered professional accountant] . . . And CPA is a term we know very well from the United States, although there it means certified public accountant. But I think it's important that they have used this CPA designation because it assists them in having their Canadian skills recognized right across North America.

But anyway what we have is legislation which is professional legislation. And if there's one thing that we in this legislature have a lot of experience with, it's with professional legislation, whether it's renewal or revision or reform. Or in fact quite often we get whole new professions where we have their legislation coming forward.

And so I'm pleased to see in this legislation that the standards that we have as a provincial government, which were developed over many years, are being met and to make sure that the legislation completes its number one function, and that's the protection of the public. And in that protection of the public, we also then have all of the protections for the people who spend hard-earned dollars and many years of their lives to get these designations so they can provide good, professional advice to corporations and individuals and governments across the province.

And so what we have, Mr. Speaker, in this Bill 112 is professional legislation of the most recent and updated kind that deals with all of the different issues that are there. And if you look at the legislation, often some of the longest parts of the legislation itself are, you know, relate to the discipline procedures and the information that is required to make sure that the public is protected.

And so one of the ways that we've developed over the years to make sure that the public is protected is to have public

representatives on the board. And this particular legislation, in section 8 I think, ends up . . . no, in section 9 says that there shall be public appointees, and these are appointees by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. And the system that's set out in this legislation is to include two people who are not chartered professional accountants to be on the board, and their job is to represent all the people of the province and to represent us as legislators in making sure that the public is protected by the institute, by the organization that is set up to regulate the whole accountancy industry.

[14:30]

Now one of the facts of life for chartered professional accountants in Saskatchewan is that most of them are members of professional corporations that extend beyond the borders of Saskatchewan and indeed beyond the borders of Canada and North America. And one of the real challenges for a professional organization located in the province of Saskatchewan is to make sure whatever happens here is connected with what happens across Canada and in fact across the world.

One of the reasons for that is that chartered professional accountants often are involved in assessment of the records and books of corporations where people rely on their information for investment. If that information is not accurate or it's recklessly prepared, chartered professional accountants can be subject to a lawsuit much the same as any other person who doesn't do their job properly. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the major issues in trying to set up this legislation and have it relate to other professional legislation across the country is, how do you regulate locally an international profession?

And, Mr. Speaker, I would have to congratulate the people in Justice who have worked on drafting this bill, working together with the accountants of the various organizations, and obviously with both the provincial organizations and the national organizations, because I think they have been able to get the right balance so that our public, our people here in Saskatchewan are protected, the professionals that work in Saskatchewan are protected, and also that people in other places that will rely on the work done by our professionals here in Saskatchewan will also be protected.

Now one of the ways that some of these accommodations can be made is through expanded use of bylaws in the actual bill itself and I think also expanded use of the regulatory powers of the provincial government. This always makes it a bit difficult for lawyers — that's the profession I belong to — because it's not always the whole . . . The whole of the story isn't in Bill 112. But, Mr. Speaker, I think that there's been the appropriate balance here to make sure that the rules are quite clear, how everything is set up is quite clear, and the ability to access all the information that one would need to fully discover the responsibility lines that might happen if any particular difficulty arose.

So we end up then, Mr. Speaker, with Bill 112 as a legislation that is basically completing this amalgamation of the various institutes. I guess the formal names are the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada, and the Certified Management

Accountants of Canada. And that's what's going to be happening here in Saskatchewan. I think that as far as we know, what's being done in Saskatchewan is among the first provinces to move forward with the implementation of this. I think that that says a lot about our civil servants here and their ability to work together with the profession to get the rules in place.

And so, Mr. Speaker, always though when you're looking at legislation like this, there is a chance that some of the finer or more detailed issues are not totally done in a proper way, so we will be listening carefully over the next few weeks or months if that's necessary to see if there are any concerns from the three professional organizations or from individual accountants, CAs [chartered accountant] or CMAs [certified management accountant] or CGAs [certified general accountant], or for that matter lawyers who see something that's going to affect some cases they might have, or just other people generally in the public.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think this is good legislation. I've watched it develop over a couple of decades I guess we can almost say, and I'm very pleased that it's here now. But we will continue to look at it diligently to make sure that it's the best that it can be. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will adjourn debate on Bill. No. 112.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate of Bill No. 112, *The Accounting Profession Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 99

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Krawetz that **Bill No. 99 — *The Public Employees Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2013*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And as always it's a pleasure to rise in this august Assembly to have an opportunity to participate in debates on the government's proposed legislative agenda. Today I'm rising to speak about Bill No. 99 which is *An Act to amend The Public Employees Pension Plan Act*.

As the minister indicated in his comments . . . We didn't get a lot from the minister on the actual substantive portions of the amendments. He spoke a lot about the role. But there's a wee short paragraph about the actual changes that are being brought forward with very little explanation about the reasons behind them, although they are self-explanatory to some extent, Mr. Speaker. So we have here a number of small changes that are being proposed to the pension plan Act.

And as the minister indicated, the Deputy Premier, this is the plan that is provided for public employees. So there are thousands of people in Saskatchewan that are reliant upon this

plan for their retirement years, and it appears the government is making some changes to hopefully make that work better.

I think one of the first changes he indicated was that right now there is I believe a requirement for the board to be unanimous for making decisions. And that is a very difficult and high standard for any organization, Mr. Speaker. So it seems appropriate, in the sense of this change, that the decision making of the board of the public employees pension plan would now be made by a majority requirement rather than a unanimous requirement. And to me, Mr. Speaker, that seems to make sense because otherwise you can be hamstrung. And very few boards that I know of actually operate . . . In fact I can't think of any that would operate on an unanimous requirement for decision making. So this seems to be an appropriate change.

The Deputy Premier didn't indicate why this was being brought forward at this time, but it's clear that this is the intent of that particular clause which would be . . . The amendment would be found . . . Oh I'll have to get back to you on that one, Mr. Speaker, because it's not jumping out at the moment. Sorry. It would be existing provision . . . It's a new provision that's being added — oh there it is — after section 4.

So it's section 4.1(1), and it basically is a clarification of how this majority decision making is going to be taking place. And what we see there, the proposed clause 4.1(1), is that a decision taken by the meeting of the board, any other action constitutes an action if it was approved by a majority of the members of the board. And then it goes into a liability clause in the second part of the proposed clause where it says that if . . . There's no liability to a member of the board if the board . . . the member did not vote or approve for the decision. And they must request that their dissent be entered into the minutes of the meeting.

So if a board member dissents with a decision and requests that it be entered in the meeting, then that board member would not be liable with respect to that decision, or if they weren't present at the meeting where the decision was taken. So it provides some protection for board members who are concerned about actions of the majority, and it gives them an outlet for protecting themselves if they feel that is absolutely necessary. So it seems to be reflecting some democratic principles here, Mr. Speaker, and that particular amendment doesn't appear to be of any concern.

The next one that's being proposed is an opportunity for the board to undertake short-term borrowing. And the minister didn't give us any sort of reasoning for that change in his comments, so we can only speculate at this point. So what we're going to do is look into this further and determine what kind of consultation was undertaken to make this type of change. We don't know if this request came from the board itself or if this is something that the ministry decided was appropriate and is imposing on the board. So we simply don't know, Mr. Speaker. So that's something we'll want to look at and I'm sure, as we have some opportunity to take a look at these changes, we'll be able to comment more on that.

The next change that the minister indicated was coming forward was to designate a default fund into which all member contributions shall be deposited unless otherwise directed by the member. And I think this is to deal with a situation . . . This

is a situation where . . . And I know as a member of this fund, we were given an opportunity some time ago to choose the type of investments that we would like our retirement funds invested in. And this apparently is to make an adjustment now because the board needs to be able to allocate members who don't elect to choose a particular fund. So there has to be a default clause that needs to be inserted in the legislation, apparently. So I think that's what's happening now with the proposal for changes to section 9(1).

And what's indicated in the explanatory notes is that there will be opportunity by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to designate the default fund. And this is being done by . . . I'm going to pull out the actual clause, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's found in section 5(1) of the proposed bill, and what it's saying here is they're going to take out the words "elect to" in both parts of the clause, 9(1) and 9(2), and they're going to create a new clause which allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council, or sorry, the board with approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, to designate one of the specialty funds.

I think there's now six specialty funds. There's a number of them. And this will allow the board to designate one of those funds as the election by the member. So there's no requirement, absolute requirement anymore for members to actually elect to participate. So it gives the board a little more flexibility for those members of the plan who are not maybe as well versed in pension funds or are busy with their lives and don't have time to seriously consider their options.

It's a complicated world, the pension world, and there are a number of different sort of shopping choices to be made by pensioners or those who will be pensioners. And often it comes at a time . . . I know for myself, in terms of financial planning, it's a complicated world we live in and sometimes you just want to trust the board that is looking after your fund. So this gives an opportunity for members to trust in the board, and then the board is being supervised by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. So we know there is some supervision being provided and that the board will have the responsibility to designate the members' funds accordingly.

And the same change in number 2, 9(2), sorry, section 9(2) where the words "elect to" are being struck. So now it just basically allows the board to calculate the amounts in those specialty funds to the credit of members who are participating in the specialty funds, so just simply removing the words "who elect to." So that makes a lot of sense, Mr. Speaker.

There's a new clause now. Moving on, clause 6 of the amendment bill is asking for a new subclause in section 10 of the existing Act. And here it is giving the Lieutenant Governor in Council authority to pass regulations to do a number of things, but basically to receive members and funds coming from a pension plan that wants to become part of the public employees pension plan. So this allows new members to come in, and once they've met certain provisions under *The Pension Benefits Act*, this allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to pass regulations to terminate memberships for some and transfer amounts from those contributions into the fund and a couple of other smaller clauses there, Mr. Speaker, that relate to the transfer into the new . . . into PEPP [public employees pension plan].

[14:45]

And then the final change that's being proposed in this bill is found in clause 7, and again it's adding a new clause that allows regulations. So again we see authority being deferred in this case to the Lieutenant Governor in Council. And as I've commented in the past and I'm sure I will in the future, these types of unscrutinized types of activities on behalf of executive government are something that are of concern. We know that executive government has considerable power already in our Assembly, and these types of regulation clauses, where activities and actions being done by the government are taken out of legislation and transferred into the executive power through Lieutenant Governor in Council actions, is something I think that we need to be vigilant about, Mr. Speaker, and that as a public we need to ensure that there's proper scrutiny.

And as I've mentioned in the past, when we receive these orders in councils that are already passed and approved by Executive Council, we do not get an opportunity to comment or provide public review of those types of regulations. So this is another example of this government using regulations rather than embedding these types of decision-making items into the actual legislation itself, which would then receive the review of this Assembly and greater public scrutiny.

In this particular case, there's a number of regulations that the government is indicating are necessary for the fund. And in the explanatory notes that we've been provided, we're told that these:

Regulations are . . . [needed] to: terminate membership of current employees coming into PEPP in their pension plan; terminate the membership of former employees of the employer coming into PEPP, who continue to be members of the pension plan; [and to] transfer the funds of the members to PEPP as prescribed by regulation; and to prescribe how the funds will be transferred. (. . . [so particularly] into which funds will they be allocated).

Again we see, you know, this may facilitate the functioning for the board and hopefully be for the benefit of the members of the plan — a little bit of self-interest because it's my plan too, Mr. Speaker. But you know, again we'll need to find out who the minister consulted with, who asked for these changes, whether or not that they are ones that are seen as appropriate by members of the pension plan and by the board itself. And we don't have any indication from the Deputy Premier in his comments introducing the bill as to what kind of consultation did take place.

And we know obviously that if these changes make sense, they appear to make sense, they appear to be appropriate, and so as our leader has said, we will work with this government when things make sense. But we don't know in this case whether the proper consultation has taken place, so that's unfortunate for people of this province. But we certainly hope that people who are affected by these changes will come forward and make the comments that we need to shine a light on the activities of this government, to shine a light, as is our role as official opposition, on decisions that are being made, particularly in this case, by executive government which, Mr. Speaker, as you know, is something that is of concern in a democratic

institution.

So we want to make sure that whenever the Lieutenant Governor in Council is giving itself additional powers, that means we see executive government giving itself additional powers and removing decision making from the purview of this Assembly and from the purview of the public. And that is of concern and we will continue to highlight that as something of concern.

Obviously pensions are very important, Mr. Speaker, to a large number of Saskatchewan citizens, and Canadian citizens of course. We've seen recent discussions on a federal level on the Canada Pension Plan. And of course one of the things that always gets overlooked in these types of discussions is people who have no access to pension plans. And I know my colleague from Athabasca indicated yesterday there's so many seniors in Saskatchewan today who are struggling greatly because they don't have access to any pension plan, and certainly not something that we are as fortunate to have here with the public employees pension plan.

So I'm always mindful, Mr. Speaker, of the benefits that we enjoy as employees of the public service vis-à-vis those people in Saskatchewan who are not able to enjoy these types of benefits. It's something that, you know, gives me comfort when I sleep at night, that I know that I'm working towards a retirement fund that will help sustain me in my senior years if I make it that far. And you know, I hope I have a long time to go, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly hope that for everyone.

But we know that a number of seniors are struggling now and particularly in Saskatoon Nutana, when I have to say that's the single most concern that I hear from people in my riding is seniors struggling on fixed incomes or lack of pension plans, and just trying to stay in their own homes. So that's perhaps a discussion that we would look to this government for, for more support and legislation on ensuring that people have access to pension plans in their retirement years.

But at this point, in terms of this particular bill, *An Act to amend The Public Employees Pension Plan Act*, I think there are some positive changes being proposed. But we'll certainly want to look at those in the context of who the minister spoke with and what kind of consultations have actually taken place. So at this point, I know my other colleagues in the official opposition will want to comment on this as well, and I would move to adjourn the debate on Bill 99, *The Public Employees Pension Plan Act*.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 99, *The Public Employees Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 98

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 98** — *The Child Care Act, 2013/Loi de 2013 sur les garderies d'enfants* 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 into discussion here this afternoon as it relates to Bill No. 98, *The Child Care Act, 2013*, and to look at some of the changes that have been announced in the speech by the minister introducing this piece of legislation, and also looking at some of the context that relates to child care across Saskatchewan that certainly has a direct impact on Saskatchewan families and on our provincial economy.

The questions of course, when we're looking at any piece of legislation, that are important for us to fully understand on behalf of Saskatchewan people is to ensure that government's engaged in proper consultation, the due diligence that they need to derive legislation. We've seen far too often by this current government, a government that rams forward, pushes forward with its own agenda, its own quick ideas, but without understanding the consequences on the ground where the impact is felt. We've seen this of course in education in a big way, Mr. Speaker, where this government continues to make changes and dismiss and disrespect the voice of educational partners — teachers, school boards, administrators, parents, students — right across the province.

As it relates to this piece of legislation, certainly we're going to be seeking some clarity from the government as to those that were consulted and as to what that consultation looked like, and as far as any of the changes that have been brought forward, what concerns may have been in place with those stakeholders. And of course that would include parents that are engaged in the child care system. That should also include child care workers. Of course that should include child care providers and those that are involved in our training institutes for preparing those to deliver support through child care facilities and early development programs.

I am pleased to see that it looks like there's been some direct contact with the CÉF [Conseil des écoles francsaskoises] and the APF [Association des parents francsaskois]. That's important. And certainly the changes as it relates as to translation and making sure that this Act is printed and available in French, that's very important.

And we recognize the service that is provided to many communities across this province through child care, and certainly we're thankful to those francophone child care providers. And we know that they not only provide a very important and vital service to families, but they also are serving, providing a service that's important in some of the demographic changes that we're experiencing as a province where many newcomers, or some of the newcomers, that are coming to this province are francophone or speak French.

So certainly it's important that these changes that I believe are made within this Act, those are important changes to ensure that those francophone child care providers, those that speak the French language, have a full ability to understand the Act to make sure that they comply with the Act and making sure that they are able to be fully engaged in the child care community.

I understand there's not many other significant changes, is what the minister has put forward here. I'm wondering what scope and considerations . . . or what considerations were on the table as they opened up this Act. Because opening up the Act of course provides an opportunity to make sure that the needs of communities and stakeholders are met. So we'll be looking for some of the considerations of government. We hope that there was broad considerations within the Act to address the needs of parents, of child care providers, of child care staff. We're not sure of that because the minister certainly didn't clarify those pieces.

Certainly we know in this province that we need to be more supportive or that that government needs to be more supportive of investing in child care. We know that for far too many families . . . And I can think of so many that I know personally, friendships, and of course constituents that struggle with finding affordable and also quality child care facilities that they can trust in. And when you think of the, even just the . . . We know of course the growing population in this province, something that should be providing us an opportunity to invest in child care facilities and making sure we're meeting this need.

We also know that there has been significant births in this province, which is an exciting thing for the province. But if you look at the last five years, you have over 60,000 new births in the province, but yet this government is going at it in a very incremental way with 500 new child care spaces for each of those years. And that's simply not enough when you think of 60,000 births, when you think of a growing population.

So it seems that government simply doesn't get the reality on the ground as it relates to child care in this province. It seems that they're not willing to listen to communities and to parents to hear the need. And that need is significant. In many ways it's causing great strain and stress on relationships and on families, and one that we should be listening to, one that that government should be listening to and not dismissing. But it also has an impact on our provincial economy.

We know that . . . I believe it's that more than 70 per cent of women with children under age five are in the workplace. And you can think of the huge strain to be in the workplace and not having certainty over the child care supports for your family. So you have many, many families that are under strain, that are piecemealing child care supports together, and many others that are impeded from entering into the workplace or entering into furthering studies or taking on training and allowing themselves to reach their full potential and to reach their goals as well. So we need to look at child care, certainly from a family focus first, about what this matters to people right across this province, to moms and dads and to the kids themselves that are receiving this very important support.

But we also need to think about it from an economic lens, understanding what it means to make the investment in child care from an economic perspective. And quite simply this government's failure to make those investments right now isn't a smart growth approach. When we're growing as a population, when we see immigration occurring the way it is, when we see the births, this provides us a tremendous opportunity as a province. But we don't see government doing their part, and we see them dismissing the reality on the ground and failing to

make the meaningful investments in child care across our province.

I understand there's also some changes in this Act to the investigative process and powers of government as it relates to licensed child care facilities. We certainly have more questions on that front because this is a really important area. The quality of care is crucial and government has a direct responsibility in ensuring that. And we hear too many stories of concerns and very, very tragic circumstances in child care facilities, and government does play a role and a very important role in providing an assurance and a check and balance to Saskatchewan families.

So we'll be looking to see what those investigative powers mean, what the scope and what the mandate of those powers are. Certainly I've heard — and I've connected directly with ministers' offices on this front — concerns from parents that have concerns over treatment within child care facilities.

[15:00]

And I think of one circumstance where a mother was raising this concern, where she went through the process and at one point the ministry engaged in the investigation, I understand. They then went back — and it was a delayed process, Mr. Speaker — and then when they finally had their recommendations, I understand those were only made available to the board itself of the child care facility. And it left that parent and it left the other parents in the child care facility with many questions because there were allegations and concerns by many parents.

And so I'm wondering how this Act will address those sort of challenges where it only seems right that they should be provided more answers about the treatment of their children, the actions of a child care facility, and the breaches and non-compliance circumstances that may or may not have been found within a child care facility. So I think we need to push for better communication of the investigations and the reports and the recommendations that are brought forward, and making sure that parents are provided the certainty they deserve about the place that many of their children spend an awful lot of time, and places that have critical impacts on their development.

As I say, people in this province are doing their part. We have families that are working harder than ever, and child care is a big stress and strain for many. The affordability itself is a major, major burden, an obstacle that many families can't overcome. And government needs to make sure they understand the importance of making sure that child care is affordable.

And of course we need to make sure there is more spaces. As we grow as a province, as businesses are investing in this province, as our population is expanding, we need to move forward the number of child care spaces in a meaningful way. And the 500 a year that we see from this government is a drop in the bucket and certainly doesn't meet the demand, certainly doesn't provide the kind of investment that would improve the economy for our province but also bring forward some peace of mind for many families across our province.

I know that other jurisdictions have moved forward with online

registries and abilities to track the demand in child care. This government continues to be reluctant to do that. It's a concern because when you chat with child care facilities and providers I know within my own constituency, but also across the province, you have many that have wait-lists that are significant. And you hear stories of wait-lists in the numbers well over 100, and that should be something that government should be caring about. And it seems as though this government's unwilling to collect that information because they're unwilling to come to terms with the realities that communities are facing.

So certainly we continue to urge this government and push this government to better track the demand in child care, to better understand the wait-lists that exist to make sure that policy can be built out in a way that meets the needs of families and communities and our economy. Right now this government's sort of ramming forward with its inadequate plan and its 500 spaces a year, which certainly don't meet the demand. What we call for is a plan that meets the needs of families and to do that, this government should be tracking that demand.

One of the other big challenges I know when I chat with child care facilities, providers, and also staff is the ability to attract and retain workers. And of course those workers play such an important life in the development of a child from an infant up through their younger years. It's a really critical stage of one's life, and we see too much transiency. We see too many shortages in this field, and government needs to be putting a spotlight on this problem and making sure that it's (a) in touch with the reality that's going on in communities and then bringing forward a plan to address recruitment and retention in the child care sector. And certainly, certainly this is a major challenge.

And I know members on, I would hope, both sides of the Assembly have heard these concerns, and I hope they're sharing, you know, on the other side of the Assembly, the government caucus, I hope that they're sharing this with cabinet because it seems to not be understood by the current government. And I know these pressures are real in every corner of this province from the Southeast to the Southwest, up through the North, certainly in through Regina and Saskatoon. But we need a government that's willing to bring forward plans that are going to address these sorts of challenges.

We're willing to work with government when it makes sense. Certainly some of the changes that we see here, the translation into French is very, is certainly something we support and something that's important. We want to make sure that the changes that are brought for the investigative powers of government are as strong as they need to be to protect children across this province. But we also want to make sure then that the communication and the reporting back to families is improved and that we're bringing about a system that provides some assurances and some peace of mind to Saskatchewan families, and certainly they deserve nothing less.

At this point in time I don't have much else to say about Bill 98, *The Child Care Act*. It has been my pleasure to enter into discussion on a matter that's critically important to many families across Saskatchewan, certainly within my constituency, and an area that's a big focus for the official opposition NDP — making sure that there's more choices, more

options for young families as it relates to child care, making sure that families aren't so heavily burdened by the cost, and making sure that we can unlock the true potential of so many young families and young mothers and young dads by making sure they can access the training and post-secondary or the employment opportunities that they deserve. And certainly those investments in child care are an important part of allowing them to do so.

But at this point in time, I'll adjourn debate as it relates to Bill No. 98, *The Child Care Act, 2013*. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 98, *The Child Care Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 100

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Reiter that **Bill No. 100 — *The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2013*** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to rise today and join debate on *The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2013*, Bill 100. I can give you the . . . We'll see if we can manage to give you an assessment of the bill here, Mr. Speaker. But you know, if you can't have funds, then really, what can you have?

But this is an interesting piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, because this is one of these pieces of bills where, in terms of how we keep the lights on in this province and the roads paved and all of that, this is one of these pieces of legislation that really goes to the heart of what makes this province work.

And it may not be glamorous or terribly earth shattering, Mr. Speaker, but in terms of having an appropriate Assessment Management Agency with updated legislation and respecting that partnership that is there between municipalities, both urban and rural, municipalities in the North, and as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the partnership that this agreement represents with the education sector, it's pretty important legislation.

So in terms of, again referring to the November 12th minister's speech introducing this piece of legislation wherein Saskatchewan's property tax . . . He goes over the taxable assessments, the fact that \$1.52 billion were generated in 2012: the 929 million from municipalities, the 595 million for the education system. The minister references the consultations that occurred with SAMA or the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency; again, Mr. Speaker, both a governance body and a representative body in terms of the partnerships that are out there and again right on the front lines of this legislation. So it's good to see that they have been consulted, and we'll certainly undertake as the opposition to verify that work.

The continued work that has been done with SUMA, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, or SARM, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, in terms of consulting with them, again very important. And we'll be looking to confirm, not just the fact of those consultations, but their tenor as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

First set of changes in terms of repealing provisions related to the 65/35 per cent split sharing of SAMA funding responsibility between the province and municipalities, which prevents the agency from seeking greater funding from the municipal sector, again, Mr. Speaker, we'll be interested to see how that provision works out and whether or not that historic arrangement, whether or not the reasons being put forward for going that arrangement are in fact the rationale or whether or not . . . how that's actually lived up to, how that shakes out on the ground.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I've been around this House long enough to have seen the good work that one Harry Van Mulligen did in partnership with the Urban Municipalities Association and SARM, and the round tables that were undertaken and the process that got us to a new revenue-sharing system with our municipalities in this province. I was very glad to see that work carried forward by the government post-2007.

But again it's not just me saying this, Mr. Speaker. I think of a good article that Laurent Mougeot, the current executive director of SUMA, wrote on arriving at a new revenue-sharing system for the province of Saskatchewan and the way that that had worked out, and not just the role of the then minister of Municipal Affairs, Harry Van Mulligen, but also the important role played by then Deputy Premier Clay Serby in arriving at a new arrangement, getting that work progressed in terms of revenue sharing, and making sure that municipalities had the tools to get their very important work done, Mr. Speaker.

And again that's work that is ongoing, and it's reflected by the fact of debating this legislation here today, and the fact that these amendments need to come forward in a timely way to reflect the new reality to address unforeseen circumstances or circumstances that evolve. But we're glad, again, that we can have a debate like this on the important sort of fundamentals of the relationship between the province and municipal sector. And again how that is brought to bear around the removal of the 65/35 percentage arrangement, we'll see how that plays out in reality.

The second measure identified by the minister in the second reading speech:

. . . to make related financial amendments that provide SAMA greater flexibility respecting increases to municipal requisitions, provide timelines that are achievable and ensure a properly funded agency, and make it more administratively efficient for government to make its financial payment to SAMA earlier.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to seeing how that looks out in practice, whether or not that flows the cash on a more expedited basis, gets it into the hands of municipalities so that they can, again, do the very important fundamental work of helping municipalities go and grow. We'll be looking to see

how that works out.

The third measure identified by the minister in his second reading speech concerns making:

... miscellaneous amendments of a non-financial nature ... [to] better reflect the agency's present roles, responsibilities, and practices, and responding to the changing responsibilities of the ministries of Government Relations and Education respecting the education funding system.

Further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, wherein:

... government has a direct interest in the delivery of property assessment services in a timely, accurate, professional, and consistent way, and in ensuring public confidence in the property assessment and taxation system. The ability to do property reinspections, to update assessments, and to conduct annual maintenance inspections to add new properties to the assessment roll are affected by the level of funding to SAMA.

Again, Mr. Speaker, very, very critical work and very important work if indeed our assessment system is to have integrity and to make sure that those critical tax dollars are both property assessed and then properly raised and afforded to the appropriate agencies. But it also in these miscellaneous amendments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it reflects the new arrangement that we have in this province, wherein what had previously been more of a partnership of equals between the province and the boards of education, the fact of how this government has removed the ability of the education sector through the boards of education to have recourse or access to financial levers in terms of levying property tax increases, Mr. Speaker.

[15:15]

And again there is a certain rationale put forward for that legislative change, Mr. Speaker, but it definitely changes the footing of the partnership. And again, Mr. Speaker, if one side of the partnership controls the financial levers in that relationship, is that a partnership or is it one side calling the shots, making the financial decisions, and then the other side of the sector having to make the decisions to fit into the box that has been put before it by the side of the partnership that is making the financial decisions in the relationship?

And again, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting wherein we've seen different evolutions over the years with certainly the school board sector and larger school units back in the late '40s, and the different sort of questions around what is the appropriate administrative body for the education sector.

I think about my father having grown up on a farm out Montmartre way and having attended the old Greenville school, which of course was built by local families donating the land, donating a portion of their income to provide the salary for the teacher, and then the fact of the local school board attaching itself to Greenville. I think there was the one room and the cloakroom, so I'm not sure if you could call it a one-room schoolhouse, Mr. Speaker, but perhaps one room and a

cloakroom in terms of the school that my father grew up attending out in Greenville in the Montmartre district.

And again there's been this evolution, and one of the sort of interesting moments in the educational sector's history in this province was the reorganization into larger school units under then Education minister and I believe treasurer for some of this time as well. But Education minister Woodrow Lloyd who'd come from Biggar, Biggar country, and too was a teacher and came out of the teachers' federation as well.

But that was work undertaken in partnership between the province and between the local school boards. And again, Mr. Speaker, we've got a very long and in some cases very proud, in some cases less proud, history of that partnership between the teachers, the school boards, and the provincial government in provision of the education in this province.

But in very recent terms, Mr. Speaker, the way that the footing of that relationship has changed wherein the province now calls many of the financial shots, and it's up to the local sort of, the local school boards to fit their priorities into the envelopes of money provided to them by the provincial government.

And again, Mr. Speaker, I think people are sort of figuring this out in terms of who's responsible for what and what is the state of the relationship. Is it a partnership, or is it more of a dictating of terms on the part of the province to the school boards? I think there are a lot of people that are still figuring that out. And it certainly wasn't like that previously but again, if the province is calling all of the financial shots and the school boards are not treated as fair partners but more as in an advisory capacity, that has a definite impact on the relationship.

So it's got some utility in that we know where the buck stops now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And certainly again there are vestiges of that partnership in relationships such as that represented here by SAMA, and the way that that agency approaches the questions of property tax and the levying and raising of property taxes in this province and the funds related thereto.

But it's an interesting and a relatively new period in the evolution of the relationship between school boards and the provincial government and how one side ... It's interesting to see how this legislation reflects various of the changes that have been made to that relationship. And again, Mr. Speaker, as we better understand how the relationship works — and not using the old arrangements to understand the present reality, but gaining that better understanding of the present reality — and just how much power that the provincial government has grabbed for itself in this relationship is pretty interesting. And again with that power, Mr. Speaker, comes great responsibilities. And I know in consulting with local school boards and school boards around this province, that that relationship and the imperatives they're in, people are having a pretty interesting time getting that sorted out.

And anyway, returning to the minister's second reading speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

School divisions and municipalities both end up forgoing increased property taxes from assessments which are not

up to date. This could also end up directly costing the provincial government more for grants to school divisions. The potential financial benefits for SAMA's client municipalities and the education sector of up-to-date property assessments, achieved through annual maintenance inspections and reinspections of municipalities, could be significant.

Again, Mr. Speaker, not just the actual instrument of the assessment and revenue and raising of tax dollars, but also ensuring that those assessments are made in as timely a manner as possible so that there isn't a lag, that there isn't shortfalls to be made up by one side of the partnership or other, and again, forgoing the flowing of important resources to this critical work of making sure that the education sector is there looking to the needs of students, developing that potential in the main for young people in this province, and all of the tremendous benefit that that has around our society and our economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So again, making these instruments more responsive and capable of acting in a more timely fashion, we're good to see that and we'll look with great interest to see how that actually works out. Returning to the minister's second reading speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

In 2012 property tax revenues were split, with 61 per cent going to municipalities and 39 per cent to education. Mr. Speaker, the amendments relating to funding will provide for a fairer balance of financial responsibility for assessment services to municipalities and the province. These financial amendments will be made retroactive to January 1st, 2014 to correspond to SAMA's fiscal year. Mr. Speaker, it's worth noting that municipal SAMA requisitions have been stable for over 10 years. Municipalities are the main beneficiary of the property tax system, and revenue-sharing funding has seen significant increases in funding for municipalities.

Again, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the split on the revenues generated and how that is properly reflected in the authorizing legislation being considered here, bringing the financial year in terms of making the amendments retroactive to January 1st, 2014 corresponding with SAMA's fiscal year. Again fair enough, Mr. Speaker, and not exactly something to stop the world from spinning about, but again very important for the critical work that is done by SAMA and done by the partners represented in this piece of legislation.

Lastly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again quoting from the deputy minister's remarks:

Mr. Speaker, provincial interests in SAMA and property assessment are outlined in the Act. The province will continue to provide funding for the assessment system. Government increased SAMA's operational funding for the 2013-14 fiscal year by \$522,000. The actual amount of provincial funding to SAMA will continue to be determined in the provincial budget process.

Again, Mr. Speaker, making sure that SAMA is appropriately funded to do the very important work that it has before it is a reasonable objective for any government to pursue. And we'll

be very interested to see how that is borne out in the legislation and to consult on that point with related stakeholders.

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that other of my colleagues are very interested in joining the debate, and not just on this legislation but other items as well. So with that I would move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 100, *The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2013*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 100, *The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 101

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Norris that **Bill No. 101** — *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2013* be now read a second time.]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, we kind of get a chance to bring some I guess concerns that may be raised later on as we debate the bill, and to join in on the debate, you know, Bill 101, *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2013*.

I'll start out with some opening comments and referring to the process that government has. And this government currently, we have seen the way they consult, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or lack of consult, or they spin it that individuals . . . They went out and, you know, and had a large group, and they tell you that they've done the due diligence. And sometimes you find out later that groups were missed, groups didn't get a chance, and groups that even sent letters telling them they are concerned about some of the stuff that this government is pushing, legislation, whether it comes to parks . . . And I can give examples of that. We've seen that on some of the, you know, the one new provincial park for sure.

Clearly you have organizations and, you know, First Nations communities, whether they're Métis, whoever, if they have concerns and they've raised them to the government, the government should listen to that advice and should not act and push legislation that counters when they say they want to consult the communities and they want to make sure that organizations and communities, individuals, that are going to be impacted by legislation this government's bringing forward, whether it's amendments, whether they're changing, it's going to impact Saskatchewan residents. They have a right to be heard and to make sure that the government takes the advice that's brought forward. There's the due diligence on their part.

And I just want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, clearly you know, whether there's individuals out there . . . And I'll make comments about certain amendments that are being proposed by

Bill 101, and I'll talk a little bit as we go through that. But I also want to say to the universities, and whether it's the student unions, students that are in our university, whether there's residents, when we look at the cost of getting an education in this province, and we've heard some of the shameful amounts, and then you look at, you know, comments made today about clearly our universities are second highest tuition rates in Canada, that's sad.

And if that's the case, we can spin it the way we want. Sad reality is, it's tough for students. They're proud. And I give credit to the students. They're doing their best. Families have done their part to represent and give a chance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for their families to move forward and get a good quality education. And that's what our students want and we're proud of our universities and our institutes. They do a great job. They try their best with the resources they're given by this government. And sometimes it's sad seeing what's going on and seeing the struggles that the universities are going through.

And you can talk about all the growth plan and you can talk about, you know, how the economy's doing well. And we're happy for that. Don't get me wrong. It's good. Saskatchewan people benefit. Not everyone. We've heard some of the challenges, people living in poverty and the challenge. So they're there.

But I want to go back to talking about, you know, and I know if the students and the university have issues, I guess the Advanced Education critic, there's an opportunity for them to get hold of the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre to raise their concerns and ask him, you know, to bring forward their concerns if they're not getting that by talking to the minister. And sometimes we know, and working with the ministry officials, for whatever reason, their concerns go nowhere.

[15:30]

And we've seen that time and time again. This government doesn't seem to want to take advice and doesn't always listen to the people when they're bringing their information forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's a sad day when we see that, the frustration. But having said that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm encouraging those individuals, if they have concerns, to bring it to, you know, members of the opposition, to raise the concerns and to bring that forward, you know.

At the end of the day, you know, whether it's the challenges, you know, that are out there, the ministry . . . So clearly I say that there are challenges, and when those issues are raised forward to, you know, the minister and government and, you know, we want to be clear that they hear those concerns. And however those messages come through, sometimes, you know, we have individuals who work for the ministries who bring that forward to the minister. There's different ways that that stuff comes forward, and sometimes those are the individuals that are in contact. So I just want to, you know, it's always the great work that universities do, and I know some of the great work that front-line workers do that work for our ministries. I don't want to take away from that.

But sometimes the government doesn't hear the concerns that

are being raised. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in itself is a challenge when you have a government who's I guess secretive, dismissive, doesn't want to take advice from the people that are going to be impacted by amendments that they're proposing. Let's be clear. And I mean I looked at the bill itself, and they're talking about a number of different amendments that they're going to do, whether it's the senate . . . And they talk about that and then they talk about reaching out, and the university is reaching out to make sure that this is what the students want, this is what's best for . . . Like I have no . . . at this point anyone telling me, yes, they're supporting or no, they're not. And hopefully if they are or aren't, you know, the critic will get the information forward so we can deal with those concerns and we can raise them in the House as we're debating this bill and seeing how these, you know, amendments are going to impact.

And you know, there's more challenges, and some are talking about three terms, and they refer to in here about, you know, Chair and the Vice-Chair, and they're changing and they're making some amendments to try to I guess . . . I guess the argument side of it would be from the government side is they want someone who has experience to be the Chair, Vice-Chair. Maybe they get to another term of serving two terms.

I'm not sure exactly right now what's there, if it's two terms and they can't seek re-election or be considered to be reappointed, elected, reappointed — the process. But I guess if they're giving them a third term and they're saying, well this is going to strengthen the organization of the senate and if that's what the senate's saying, I have no reason to believe other than hearing from individuals on the senate that, you know, serve the universities and give the good advice that they . . . and direction that they give. And I don't want to take away from the good work that's been done by many who do their job and sit on the senate, whether they're from the faculty or how they come about to be appointed, whether it's two terms.

But they're raising a number of amendments that this government . . . But I want to go back to the amendments that they're proposing. There's about five of them. They talk about some housecleaning items in here as well. And that's going to be interesting. Any time you talk about housecleaning — and it's a simple word to say, housecleaning — but you always wonder, you know, the details. You know, you want to make sure of the details and what's exactly and who's going to be impacted later on.

And the changes come in and you're wondering, okay, the details. And let's make sure that the process is done and we go through the details. And sometimes we're not sure who's going to be impacted, and will they be impacted in a good way with these amendments. And how will they impact the students? How will they impact the universities? And you know, does that open it up, you know, even further with the institutes when you're making amendments? Every time you make changes, you hope. And I want to be clear. I think our leader has said this very clearly from opposition: when it makes good sense and it's best for Saskatchewan people, we'll support the government.

And I think we've shown that and we can work together. But I'll tell you, there's a lot of times where we can bring in amendments and we make suggestions that we hear from the people of our province who, you know, whether you're at

coffee row, whether they call a meeting, they come into your office, your constituency office, and they share their concerns. And we share that with the government, and the government again is, you know, really doesn't want to listen to it. They have their own agenda and they want to push ahead with it. And that's the sad reality.

Because what they're saying is to the people that are raising the concern to the opposition . . . And I don't know that they haven't tried to get a hold of the minister or the ministry to talk about the changes or, you know, saying how these will impact us. I have no way of knowing that other than, you know, being told that. So when I say that there's individuals who raised their concerns with the opposition, we've raised them with government and the government does not listen to them, they think it's like it's our idea. And sometimes they have to remember, we all have a role to do in this House. And Saskatchewan people have asked the opposition to make sure we hold the government to account, to make sure we ask them tough questions. That's the only way to work. And let's be clear. The government has clearly a large majority. It will push what it wants and doesn't.

But I want to commend the nine members and my eight colleagues as opposition, holding this government to account on behalf of Saskatchewan people that's been asked to do. And whether it's amendments to the Acts or the university or whatever changes are coming, legislation that's coming, and changes, whether it's amendment, it is impacting Saskatchewan people. And they have asked us to do our due diligence and we will do all we can representing them, and raise their concerns when we're asked to do that. And whether that's . . . And that could be long-term care, that can be our roads, it can be education. There are many ways . . . And we see how our teachers were treated. We see how our families are being treated. And in northern Saskatchewan, we see about housing. And it goes to show a government that listens or doesn't listen, a government that takes away.

So when we make legislation changes, amendments, we're impacting Saskatchewan residents. And there's so many different ways that we impact Saskatchewan residents. And like I say, when you have a government that doesn't listen to the families that are out there, whether they're living in poverty, whether they're having addictions, and they're struggling with the economy . . . Yes, and we've said that this government doesn't seem to listen.

It's got a large majority. It's fine. They like to pat themselves on the back, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But changes that they're bringing forward here like in Bill 101, we're not sure how that will impact Saskatchewan families. We're not sure how that will impact the universities. We're not sure of that. So there's questions. And that's the reason why we're asking some of the tough questions and want to raise some of the concerns that we may hear, and want to offer to Saskatchewan residents to get a hold of the opposition, like I said earlier, to deal with some of the challenges. And we're not just sure of what these changes and how . . . Will they be better for the universities? I don't know that at this point. That's why we're debating it and that's why we're going to find out. And I think I encourage the universities . . . And if these are good changes and it benefits the university, then good. Good for us as a province and as a

university. We're listening to the people.

But we've seen the track record of this government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a shameful track record that they have when it comes to consulting First Nations, Métis, Saskatchewan people, families, teachers, students, parents. You know, dictate how things will be, tell them how their boards of education . . . They tell them how it will be. Do they consult with them? Do they talk . . . Oh they say they do. They say they do, but they have such a large majority, they just push, push, push, do it their way, and you'd better like it. And if you don't like our ideas, we'll come after you. That is not the right way to do it. To split our province and split individuals and to push, that is sad. That is sad.

So you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's just hope these changes that are coming will benefit the university. And if they are, again I go back to saying that's good for the students, good for the university, good for the province. These are good changes, as long as they've made sure they've listened to the universities, they listened to the students, to the families that will be impacted when they're going on these changes, whether it's the senate, you know. And you look at the way they bring their strength and the good work they've done.

So I don't want to take away from the good work that organizations, the universities have done. Students and parents are very proud of sending . . . The cost, and I know some of my colleagues in their previous comments talked about the costs. And we've heard that. So there are challenges. So let's hope the due diligence has been done in these amendment changes, that the university, the students that will be impacted, that the government will hear the concerns they have. And if it's positive, great. I just bring some of the concerns.

And I'm just wondering myself, you know, how it will be. And we'll see, at the end of the day, how this legislation is presented and how it's used. And I hope it's used in a positive way to help Saskatchewan families, students, the universities, so we move our province, as we say in the area. We don't forget about people.

But again I go back. And the last comments I want to say, this government's track record of listening to Saskatchewan families, Saskatchewan people, organizations — whether it's First Nations, Métis, education, teachers, working men and women, working families — this government's track record is not very good when it comes to consulting before they make changes. They change, change, change and then they say, oh well. Oh sorry about that. You know, oh, oh, we're going to do better next time. And that's not the way you do it. You don't make the changes and then go say, oh sorry. Sorry, we're going to do better next time. Let's talk. And we're not going to change what we've done. We're going to go ahead with that, but . . .

So that's why I say some of these changes we see sometimes, we're not sure the impact. So we've got to watch them. And I say to the universities and to the students, keep an eye on them. If it's what you want and it helps you, great. We want you to do good. We want our students to do great. We want our universities to do great. And we see some of the struggles and the challenges they've had. And we hope that these will help

them move forward and continue in a good way because we're proud of our universities. We're proud of our families and students that go there. So let's hope these changes will do exactly that, improve a quality of life for Saskatchewan people and the university in itself.

So I'm hoping at the end of the day the government has done and it says what it's done with consulting, and making sure it's done right and it's listening to what it heard. And it's not pushing its own agenda and not listening, saying, oh we listened, but they push their own agenda — that, I hope, is not what's happened.

At this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm prepared to adjourn debate on Bill 101.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member has moved to adjourn debate on Bill 101, *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 107

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff that **Bill No. 107 — *The Wildfire Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am pleased to enter the discussion today on Bill No. 107, *An Act respecting the Prevention, Management, Control and Extinguishing of Fires or The Wildfire Act*.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill replaces *The Prairie and Forest Fires Act, 1982*, which was a bill that at first came about in the '50s and then was amended in 1982. And as the minister has pointed out, it is likely time that this new legislation keep up with different changes that have taken place over the years, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

One of the things that this bill . . . Well I need to talk a little bit about some definitions in the bill actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to give you the definition of wildfire. So:

“wildfire” means an unplanned fire that burns organic soil, grasses, forbes, shrubs, trees and associated vegetative fuels in their natural or modified state, and does not include structural, vehicle or landfill fires.

So that is what a wildfire is defined as in the Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think it's important to note, and the minister had said this in his comments, that the primary focus of the legislation is the prevention of wildfires, over which 50 per cent are caused by humans. And the reality is with climate change we can anticipate that we'll be seeing more and more storm events and as such likely more wildfires, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We need to look to places like California who've had huge, devastating

losses very recently.

We can look in Saskatchewan here, and in 1999 in La Ronge seven homes were lost in a wildfire. In 2002 Turtle Lake, 54 cabins and homes were destroyed. I remember that one particularly well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I used to have a cabin at Turtle Lake. And it was not on my side of the lake, but I had friends on the other side who actually were very close to being at risk of losing their property. I remember that fire particularly well and the feeling of panic and concern many cabin and homeowners had.

[15:45]

In 2003 over 334 homes and businesses were lost in British Columbia, actually around Kelowna. I remember that one very well as well. I had a friend who was doing Ironman right around that time in Kelowna, and there were some challenges with running the race because the wildfires had been burning and the smoke was a huge challenge around running this particular race. And then we only need to look to a couple of years ago in Slave Lake, Alberta where 374 homes were destroyed. So these are wildfires. Fires in general are a huge issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I think, going on with some of the definitions, so I've mentioned what wildfire is defined here in the Act. We need to talk about the wildfire management area. I do have some remarks about that in a moment, but:

“wildfire management” means wildfire prevention, detection, control, preparedness, suppression, investigation, research, training, education or reclamation and includes any activities related to the foregoing;

“wildfire management area” means:

a provincial forest, including a provincial forest within the boundaries of a rural municipality or the Northern Saskatchewan Administration District;

park land [which is defined in *The Parks Act* so we would have to look at *The Parks Act* for the park land definition];

vacant Crown land; and [this is the one that I think that's important here, Mr. Deputy Speaker]

(iv) every quarter section of land lying wholly or partly within 4.5 kilometres of the boundaries of a provincial forest;

That actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was the piece that brought on a bit of a firestorm, shall we say, this past spring, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The government had an Act prepared but had a huge outcry from the rural municipalities. What would have happened, right now the Act that this one is replacing had that 4.5 kilometre burning permit area to act as a buffer zone, but what the government was proposing is putting the cost, the onus on the rural municipalities to pay for . . . to either provide the fire suppression in that area, or if they couldn't do that, the provincial government would do that, but then bill the rural municipalities. And there was a huge outcry this spring with

respect to that proposed change.

So in fact I'm just looking at a news article from the spring, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm just trying to find the date here. But in the RM [rural municipality] of Buckland, they were very concerned about this. It's *The Wildfire Act*, from the news story I'd like to read:

If the Wildfire Act comes to fruition, the Buckland Fire Department (BFD) would be responsible for stopping a wildfire in these woods. But Fyrk [who is part of the RM] believes this isn't feasible.

"Let's say it's three kilometres back in the bush. They can't do anything. What they can do is stand on the edge and if the fire burns out of the bush protect the homes," he said.

Because there are no roads or access points, it would be next to impossible for the BFD to get into the forest and stop a rapidly advancing fire.

So again the point is, if the RM couldn't stop the fire, then the province would, but the onus would be on the rural municipality. And they have argued that they couldn't . . . that was just cost prohibitive and would break rural municipalities. In fact there was a quote in another news story. The bottom line, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is rural municipalities were very concerned about the cost of having to take on fighting fires in these buffer zones, which had never happened before. And so this was about downloading costs to already stretched rural municipalities when obviously this is a role for the provincial government to play.

So the reality is fires can be incredibly expensive, and it's a huge, huge problem. So the government, to their credit, heard the rural municipalities. And it was hard not to hear the rural municipalities. The rural municipalities, the RMs, were loud and clear that this was an untenable situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was absolutely not acceptable, and some changes were made. And as the bill is before us, the status quo is being maintained and the province will continue to maintain responsibility for that buffer zone around parkland, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So that is a good thing.

As I mentioned, wildfires have caused a huge amount of damage, both in Saskatchewan and across Canada and in the United States. And it's positive to see an Act coming forward that the goal is to prevent and attend to these wildfires.

So I know one of the things that happens in this fall session is legislation is first introduced, and it's an opportunity for the opposition to go out and speak to the public, to speak to stakeholders to find out if there are challenges with the bill that have been included or things that have been missed in the bill. So between now and the spring session, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know we will be going to various stakeholders and asking them if they are satisfied with what they see in the bill and what the shortcomings or what the strengths of the bill might be. And that is part of our job as opposition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to find out those things.

So we will be reaching out and asking those questions. But I do

know I have colleagues who will be, down the road, interested in speaking to Bill No. 107, *The Wildfire Act*. So with that, I would like to move to adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Riversdale has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 107, *The Wildfire Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 111

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Duncan that **Bill No. 111** — *The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act, 2013* 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 is a pleasure to rise and speak on Bill No. 111, *An Act to amend The Personal Care Homes Act*. And it's a short Act but it's an important one, and I'm happy to speak to it today.

And there's so many different reasons for it. And one of course and the most important one is, how do we look after our seniors in their senior, their golden age. And I think that seniors who have contributed so much to our province, done so much, the last thing on their mind should be is how will they . . . What kind of shelter will they have as they retire? And we're seeing this as a major concern — a major concern — in Saskatchewan.

In fact it's ironic, today is National Housing Day, Mr. Speaker. And in Saskatoon right now there is a housing conference based on needs of seniors. And it's really an important conference and I wish I could be there, but my assistant is there today because we feel it's an important issue.

So this issue of personal care homes, and I know that the minister has talked about we shouldn't confuse the different kind of homes for seniors, personal care homes. He wanted to make sure we understood that this was personal care homes, not long-term care homes. And fair enough, there is a division, but I think right across the spectrum, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a concern in this province that senior housing is not being looked after by this government. It's being left to neglect. And whether it's seniors who would just like a little support in making sure their homes are up to snuff, up to code, or those who are in long-term care, right from one end of a continuum to another it's a major, major issue.

And so I appreciate the minister's concern that we don't confuse this, and because we know that the personal care homes are privately operated homes and they are not run by the regional health authorities, but they are in fact licensed by the provincial government. So there are some differences.

And I will get into the specifics of that right now but I want to set the context of what too many seniors face today in Saskatchewan. And of course this government . . . Because we

know they often reach for excuses when it comes to being challenged why they are not stepping up to the plate. And we saw that today in question period. They could not own up to their deficiencies, their failures, and say, listen you know — and we have heard this so often, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's getting a bit tiresome — there's more work to do. For the last six years, we've heard there's more work to do. And well certainly there is and certainly there is. But clearly they have to set some standards. And you know, today we heard them talk about goals, but they seem to refuse to set standards when it comes to senior care, particularly when it comes to staffing, that type of thing.

And then they will go on about whatever the excuse may be, but certainly it is not their fault. That is their line. And the closest to any kind of responsibility is some acknowledgement that there is more work to be done, more work to be done. Well of course there's more work to be done. That goes without saying, isn't it? I mean it's like saying there's more learning to be done by students. I mean where does this get to be a little bit silly is the fact that it's used as a cop-out for accepting responsibility for work that needs to be done.

And in fact when I get into the meat of the matter here, Mr. Speaker, this will be interesting because the government talks in this Act about how it was urged by the auditor and the Ombudsman to do this. And when I actually went back and actually got the chapter from the auditor's report, there are five recommendations. And I would like to know, where are the five recommendations? This is the fifth of the recommendations and probably the lightest of them all, the most simplest ones. And we've asked and the member from Nutana asked last night a very simple question: why wait? Why are we waiting two years? In fact, this report from the auditor was from 2012 so we're taking two years to get around to this.

And so you know, it reminds me of a little saying that my mother had, a round TUIT jar, right? You've got these little round TUIITS. And this is what this government, instead of more work to be done, it's going to be when we get around to it, you know. And because they just can't seem to grasp the seriousness of this situation and the fact that too many seniors . . . And whether it's as simple as renovations in their homes so they can stay in their homes, and I know the member from Cumberland has often raised the issue of rent to own in the North so that they can own their homes by the time they do hit their senior years. And then we have long-term care and personal care.

So, Mr. Speaker, and in fact I had the opportunity . . . And actually it was interesting because both the Minister of Health and myself were at the seniors' housing summit in Weyburn this past June. And I found it very interesting. And of course they brought their initiatives and what they're going to talk about, and that was well received. Except what wasn't well received, the short . . . the fact that not a lot of government attention was being paid to the folks organizing the summit, and the fact that they only stayed for a brief period of time and then left.

But the minister was there, and that was good. And he did share some comments. But I think that what's really important is, and I think they're going to be talking about this today in Saskatoon

at the seniors' housing summit, is the fact that seniors' housing is much more unique than the general population in many ways. When we go to housing summits . . . And this government actually, you know, it's interesting because in their work-to-do list, they seem to have a real priority for housing summits. We've got to have several housing summits. And that's one of the things that I've really seen over the past while is how many housing summits we've had.

And as a result of that, we often see housing continuums, and they often seem to equate seniors in the same kind of camp as students, as if somebody's a senior for only four years or six years, the years that you may be a student. And actually students I know actually can be longer than six or eight, could be even 10 years. But seniors live a significant period of time, Mr. Speaker. And we all hope that we do, when we're seniors, that our life expectancy after 60, 65 will be 20, 30 years, we hope. And it's not going to be four or six years, the length of time for us to get our undergraduate degree or our teacher's degree or engineering degree.

But somehow this government often thinks seniors' lifespan is very short, very short. In fact when we get a housing continuum, we see the typical housing continuum often starts out on the left side with a rental and perhaps even emergency shelter that we're often seeing, that now in this new Saskatchewan, emergent shelters really become an issue, particularly in cities where there is extreme vacancy shortages, and we know that's the case in cities like Estevan.

[16:00]

But we also see it with cities that have a very good vacancy rate, but the issue is not the shortage of housing but actually the fact that the housing stock does not have a very good quality. It's not up to code that should be expected. And we see that in cities like Prince Albert where actually there is a fair amount of rental property that's available, but it's just not adequate. It's not up to code. And then you have to the right, to the end of the continuum, a detached bungalow, and it seems that's what we all want to aspire to in our work lives, and fair enough that we do want to own our own homes. But many may not. They may end up wanting to live in a condo or rental is a good fit for them as well.

But for seniors that housing continuum doesn't work. In fact it starts with quite often owning something and then, what will your final days be like? And that's where we get into the whole issue of, you know, owning, whether it's a condo or whether it's a detached bungalow or . . . And then moving along the line to where you go into personal care home or long-term care. And we hope, and we share this I think right across the floor, that in fact our hope is that we can stay in our homes as long, as long as we can. And that works best for everyone. We know that's best for seniors. There's a sense of purpose when you own your home, a sense of community because you're with people you know. And I think people are much healthier when they are in that circumstance.

The challenge becomes when you don't have the resources to do that and of course this is what the Minister of Health has often said. And he has talked about how can we keep people in our homes. That's our first, first thing that we need to think

about for seniors. And we need to think then as well, if they are staying in their homes, what can we do to make sure their communities are strong. We've talked about that, whether it's safety in their communities, whether it's transportation, whether they have adequate income, whether they have supports, whether it be health, that type of thing, nearby.

And we know as well that, and I won't go at length on this, but as well the emergence now of the condos, that we have so many condos in Saskatchewan. And that can be a good thing, but seniors have raised particular concerns about that as well, that in fact when they thought they were moving into a community of like-minded owners that in fact they found out that half the condo, the building, was in fact tenants, and they weren't going to be part of any condo association and there weren't going to be the social activities and that type of thing.

And so the government refusal to really work with that is a concern because we know other provinces are looking at that, particularly BC [British Columbia] and Vancouver, when they recognize that condos are in a sense very much a home and we should be able to regulate that type of thing. It's just not an owner by whatever the owner wants to do, that in fact they get to do, that in fact an absentee landlord can create issues.

But, Mr. Speaker, what we're here today to talk about is that Bill 111, *The Personal Care Homes Act*, and the publication of the inspections that the government will do and that they will publish this in different formats, I expect. It just won't be on the Internet. I mean that would be the best way because clearly . . . or the most appropriate way because a lot of people have become used to that. And that they're going to do it in the same way that we have come to expect public health inspections of restaurants.

We were very happy to see this government move forward with the public registry of buildings with asbestos. That was a real move forward. And we still have . . . We're looking to see that registry be improved. It's not quite as user-friendly as we thought it might be. Now I haven't checked in the last couple of weeks, so if it has been modified then I'm looking forward to seeing that, but I know that the key is not just putting up the information. The key is making it searchable and that it is user-friendly, and if it is not, then people will be discouraged.

And the interesting thing will be that if you're considering putting a . . . If you're part of the decision-making process where your parent or your uncle or aunt is, you're part of the decision of putting them in a personal care home, you may be in that age group of 50 to 60 to 70 that aren't very friendly to the Internet, and you may have some, you know, Internet illiteracy issues yourself. So it's even more, more important that that's the case.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think that . . . Before I get into the personal care home auditor's report because that was cited as one of the main causes or drivers of this, I do want to say that, you know, we are concerned that the government is not taking this as seriously as they should. We've raised this issue. We raised it last spring. And there's been numerous media stories about this and where the government clearly, when it's been drawn to their attention that staffing ratios is a problem in long-term care homes, they have consistently resisted that and dismissed that

and said, that's not the problem. And in fact, it was interesting that the minister said that he was not . . . And I'll quote. This is from *Saskatchewan News* and this was April 24th, and I quote:

Health Minister Dustin Duncan insists setting staffing standards is not something the government is currently considering. He says each health region gets a quarterly report on staffing from each care home and he doesn't see reason for alarm.

So he doesn't see reason for alarm, and then . . . But they do set out and they do an investigation, and then they get the results. And of course, they weren't really too forthcoming, but because of our action in terms of the freedom of information request, the government released the information on October 2nd. And all of a sudden, he goes from being, and I quote, not . . . that he doesn't see reason for alarm. Then he goes to being, he says, and I quote, "Saskatchewan Health Minister Dustin Duncan says details in a report on conditions in the province's long-term care facilities are 'dismaying' and 'heartbreaking' and left him 'angry.'"

So it's quite a change now. He may be saying . . . But still does have nothing, and he still says, has absolutely nothing to do with staffing. But it's just . . . It's funny how one person in one group of people can be in that boat, in that kind of ship, where everybody else is saying, you know, they weren't surprised to hear this. They weren't surprised at all to hear this.

And you know, this is what Candace Skrapek, past president of the Saskatoon Council on Aging, says. She wasn't surprised by the findings, wasn't shocked by the findings. And she says, and I quote, "They're certainly consistent with what we have heard (from) caregivers and older adults."

People knew this. They knew this. And so while this is long-term care and we're talking about personal care, but we are talking about seniors. We're talking about all seniors, making sure they get shelter in a dignified and safe and quality manner. And so this is just one part of the package. And while I don't know why we were . . . why he may want to split hairs and say, be sure we know what we're talking about here. Now there is 8,700 seniors who live in long-term care, and we're actually talking, I think — then I'll get the numbers — over 3,000 seniors live in, or people live in a personal care home. And some may not be seniors; some may be with disabilities that they need to be in a personal care home.

But I do want to just reflect on a moment that I found it ironic today that while the government made much of their announcement on the 1st of October about what they're going to do for long-term care homes and that they created this \$10 million Urgent Issues Action Fund — and that's what it's called, Urgent Issues Action Fund — but today when pressed about, so what was the total asked for the proposals under this Urgent Issues Action Fund, they didn't know. They didn't know what the answer was, or if they did know, they weren't going to tell us.

And, Mr. Speaker, I find that alarming that, considering the severity of the situation in which the minister went from not having any concerns to being angry that . . . But he didn't have any answers today. Couldn't give us any more details about

this. That leaves us with a lot of questions, leaves us with a lot of questions. And so we see that care homes are in crisis and whether they are in long-term care or personal care homes, there is a lot, a lot of work to be done.

So now the minister did talk that it was the Ombudsman and the auditor that really were the drivers behind this legislation. I don't know if, you know, from reading the auditor's report — and I may be wrong on this, but the minister can correct me — whether she had called for legislation. I don't see any reference to the actual legislation, but she did call for the ability to do this.

But we know that with the Ombudsman it was really the problems with the closure of St. Mary's Villa in Humboldt that drove the issue around making sure the health region did a better job. But I'm not sure if that's what the Health minister was speaking about, but we'll be interested in knowing more about that when we get into committee about that.

But I want to talk a bit about the auditor's report because I think it was interesting. Because I know people at home want to know about, so what is this difference between personal care homes and long-term care homes? And how many people are involved in this? And I think that it's interesting to take a few minutes and just to review what the auditor had written.

And this is from her 2012 report, volume 2, chapter 34, "Regulating Personal Care Homes for Resident Health and Safety." And so of course, you know, it's been established that the Ministry of Health is responsible for regulating personal care homes in this province and this requires licensing and inspecting personal care homes. And as the minister has said, they're privately owned facilities that provide accommodation, meals, and personal care to senior residents.

And we have about 245 personal care homes, and there is a good chart in here about where they are. And we know that Regina — and this is from during 2011 and '12 — and we know in the Regina Qu'Appelle region there is 76 personal care homes, and their licensed bed capacity is 893. So that'd be an averaging — just in my head quickly — over 10 per home; whereas Saskatoon is 93 with 945, so slightly fewer, but still 10, 10 per person.

And they're spread out throughout the province. Prince Albert has 27. Those would be the three big ones. Sunrise has 14. But clearly . . . and Five Hills has eight for 325. But they would be larger. That's interesting. Eight personal care homes for 325. That's about 40 persons per care home. That's pretty, those are big care homes in Five Hills. I guess, you know, whereas Sun Country has 8 for 225, if my math is right on that. Whereas Heartland has six for 56 — the 10. So it's interesting in Five Hills, and that that's an interesting thing. So maybe there's something happening in Five Hills that we don't know about. But we are interested. We are curious. We are curious. So that's a good thing for committee.

[16:15]

And so at any rate, this is what they found:

For the period of April 1, 2011 to August 31st, 2012, we

found the Ministry did not have fully effective processes to regulate personal care homes.

Now that wasn't in the '90s. That was just a couple of years ago. So we can't blame us for that. All right? And so I know they'll get around to figuring out how it could be our fault, but that was during their time. All right? Just to make sure we got the right time span on this. Okay? All right? Just to make sure we're clear on that, okay?

And it said that:

The Ministry documented inspection results but did not have a good system for tracking and following up problems identified during inspections. When problems are identified through inspections, the Ministry needs to follow up with identified personal care homes to ensure that the problems have sufficiently been addressed. We noted instances . . . identified through inspections continued for more than two years.

For two years they went on. Now in my . . . You know again, so that would take it back to 2010. So clearly they need to do a better job here.

Now it talks about providing, the auditor provided the Ministry with five recommendations for the Ministry to, one, and I quote:

Use a risk-based approach to inspect high-risk personal care homes more frequently

Provide guidance for its staff to assist in determining when to conduct unannounced inspections of high-risk personal care homes

Provide written guidance to staff for consistent and prompt follow-up of personal care homes that do not comply with actions required after inspections

Use a system to track personal care home inspection dates, non-compliance issues, required actions, and dates that personal care homes complete these actions.

So that if they're not completed, they're not closed off.

And last, and this is the fifth one, and this is the one we're debating today. But I hope . . . And this is what we'll be asking in committee, what happened to the other four? But the fifth one is:

Publicly report inspection results when personal care homes do not comply with *The Personal Care Homes Act*, 1991.

So there you go. So there you go, Mr. Speaker. We have set the stage for this, and the auditor did a fine job. And clearly the ministry has acknowledged that they have not completed the work here. We are curious about the other four concerns they have, but we need to have some answers on those things.

So, as I said, that there are about 245 homes in the province. Thirty-two hundred people are in those homes. They have

varied care needs. Some have light care needs: meals, encouragement to be physically active, reminders for correct and timely medications. Some are disabled adults or seniors with moderate to heavy care needs. And some may also need help due to complex health conditions such as chronic illnesses such as diabetes, dementia, and recovering from strokes.

And we understand that the care received in the home will be safe. And the cost generally ranges from 1,000 to \$4,000 a month and is set by each facility without review by the ministry because the current legislation does not require a review of fees. And that might be something we think about. Is this a fair value for the costs? I know that has always been an issue raised. Are people getting fair value?

And of course we've seen with seniors raising concerns about rents going up, but they also raise concerns about costs of private care homes going up. And there is no control. They just can go up and that's just it. As long as they have the licence and the licence based on meeting the needs, it can go up. And so this is an issue too that we should bring up. And they can have some top-up from the Ministry of Social Services, and that can be up to \$1,800 a month that that's the case.

So what were the results of the audit objective? And it was an interesting read, Mr. Speaker. And I would encourage all members; we should really pay attention to what the auditor says. And I know this is a hard thing for this government to do because they automatically dismiss the auditor and say that well, they have a different point of view on many of the concerns that she has raised. But she has raised some really important concerns when it comes to how our seniors are cared for. So this is what she said:

During April 1, 2011 to August 31, 2012, the Ministry of Health did not have fully effective processes to regulate personal care homes in accordance with *The Personal Care Homes Act, 1991*. As such, it needs to perform more timely inspections of high-risk personal care homes. As well, when problems are identified through inspections, the Ministry needs to follow up sufficiently with the identified personal care homes to ensure the problems have been satisfactorily addressed.

And so her remarks are that up to 2012, they were inspected about every two years and the renewal of the personal care home licences was not coordinated with the personal care home inspections. All right? And now they have changed that, but I think we need to make sure that that continues to be the case. And also it talks a bit about the fact that how often are the high-risk homes inspected. That in fact what they should do is they:

... uses routine inspections and investigations to monitor whether personal care homes comply with required standards. Staff inspect some homes more often based on their knowledge of the homes but ... [they've] not developed a plan that outlines homes that should be inspected more frequently based on risk.

And they have a checklist. And again, that makes some sense but that's something we should do.

One of her concerns was that staff schedule routine inspections, but they don't make, they don't usually make unannounced inspections. During the inspection, the staff will discuss the home practices with the owner, and then they will explain the findings at the end of the inspection, but they don't make uninspected inspections. So we, the auditor recommends that they do two things: (1) the high-risk homes, go there more often, visit them more often, and (2) do some unannounced inspections to make sure that you're actually seeing what you should be seeing.

The follow-up is very, very important. And the other one and this is the fourth one, that they "... use a system to track personal care home inspection dates, non-compliance issues, required actions, and dates that personal care homes [actually] complete these ... [things].

She goes on to note that BC, Ontario, Alberta report the inspection results on the senior care facilities on public websites. So it would make some sense. And it is something that the ministry has been considering for a while. It must be on their more-work-to-do file. Let's make sure it gets done.

But when we go to committee I know that we'll have some questions regarding the auditor's report. What has been done? What's been the quality of care for seniors in personal care homes? And that we will be making sure that seniors, when they are faced with those difficult choices, will know that they will be looked after, that the government in its responsibility will do the best thing. At this point we don't have that confidence.

I know when we read the media and we see that seniors in seniors' groups right across the board are not surprised at the kind of alarming circumstances that many seniors and adults find themselves in personal care homes or long-term care homes have ... have us consider a lot of questions for committee. And so I know that my colleagues will have a lot of questions and will want to make sure they get up on the floor on this.

But as I said, today of all days, it is a good day to be debating this and making sure that we do as well as we can. As I said, it's National Housing Day and it's one where we don't just think of the semi-detached bungalows, that we actually think of everyone in our communities and how can we best meet their housing needs. And that is to make sure they have safe, affordable, quality homes. And personal care homes fall into that category. We can't let that slide by.

So in many ways we think publishing the results of the inspections are appropriate. We think that's good. We're not sure why it's come to this, that we're going to be debating this over the next several months. But this is the government's way of getting around to it. But I know that many of my colleagues will want to be speaking to this, and it's one that is important. But as I said, there were four other recommendations that the auditor made and we will want answers in committee about those recommendations and where they are. And I'm curious about the Five Hills personal care homes, how it works that ...

But with that, Mr. Speaker, I think that I will take my seat and I am moving that we adjourn the debate on Bill No. 111, *The Act*

to amend *Personal Care Homes Act*. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 111, *The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act, 2013*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 108

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Doherty that **Bill No. 108** — *The Athletics Commission Act* be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Glad to take my place today to rise and join the debate on Bill No. 108, *The Athletics Commission Act*. This is a really interesting piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and it's timely. It's topical. It's dealing with something that is fairly contentious in our society, but on the face of this, Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty interested in the approach that the government has taken and I'm pretty interested to see how this . . . certain assumptions we make about provisions in the legislation actually working out on the ground or not.

First off I'd say, to sort of own up to some of my own sort of biases in this, Mr. Speaker. The commission that has been brought forward, the individuals that have taken place or will take place on the commission, I think that the government, again as our leader says, when the government is doing something well, we'll certainly be there to say so. Where there's something going wrong, we'll certainly be there to call that out as well. But I am quite impressed with some of the individuals they've put on the commission, Mr. Speaker.

And first and foremost, I'm talking about AJ Scales. And AJ is — as I was relating to one of the Pages, Mr. Speaker — is one tough dude and certainly a bit of a pioneer when it comes to mixed martial arts in Saskatchewan. His home training studio is in Regina Elphinstone-Centre, I'm proud to say, Mr. Speaker, and I've known AJ as a person. We have friends in common. Certain of my friends trained with AJ Scales over the years. And anyway in AJ I find someone who's quite impressive, not just as an athlete but as an entrepreneur and as a community-minded person trying to build his support, his passion, out into the community. And so again I'll say it clear for the record: I was generally impressed with the calibre of individuals brought forward for the commission, Mr. Speaker, but particularly impressed with the nomination of AJ Scales to that body.

[16:30]

Again we've got the former mayor of Regina, Pat Fiacco, who's been named to the commission. And I should also explain here, Mr. Speaker, that of the boxing fans in my life, my father for many, many years has been a pretty enthusiastic boxing fan.

And certainly . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member from Walsh Acres is looking to get into the debate and maybe he will, but if he's going to heckle, I guess if he could state it a little more clearly, Mr. Speaker, and then maybe I could make it out. If he could, you know, state it clear and then not just recede into the giggling right away, that would be helpful.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of growing up in the McCall family, there is nothing my father delighted in more than getting the gloves on my brother and I and having us go at it. And I think it's an ongoing disappointment in his life that none of the kids went into boxing in a fairly serious way, but we've tried to make up for it in other ways, Mr. Speaker. But certainly in the McCall household we weren't strangers to the notion of going out to the fights or going to see a card, and that is certainly where I first gained knowledge of an individual named Pat Fiacco.

And certainly having worked with Pat Fiacco as one elected official to another and knowing something of his passion for the sport of boxing, and not just his passion and his own individual accomplishment in that regard, but his globally recognized credentials when it comes to refereeing and serving as a boxing official, and obviously his considerable talents as somebody that's done a lot for the sport of boxing . . . And not just the training side of things, you know, the Ken Goff classic and the various sort of cards that he's been party to either as a fighter or as an organizer over the years. This is an individual that again is well placed on this commission, and we're glad to see him there.

And you know, again the general calibre of the individuals for the commission was impressive across the piece, but in particular from . . . given the role that municipalities have played in the question of how to properly regulate and introduce regulations around mixed martial arts, carrying on from the previous sort of regime as regarded regulations in boxing, both amateur and professional, in the province, Mr. Speaker.

And given the role that the municipalities have played in this question, I think that the city mayors' caucus and SUMA and the way that they have come forward and said, you know, this is something that we hear a lot about from our constituents; this is something that we want to work in partnership with the province on, and again to see the mayor of Humboldt, Mayor Eaton, is to see His Worship on this commission, again Mayor Eaton being an individual who's brought . . . does a tremendous job in the kind of work that he has endeavoured on behalf of his constituents and the kind of statement that makes about what I think Mayor Eaton will bring to the panel, bring to the commission again is encouraging.

And to get back around to where I'd started, Mr. Speaker, again when we see encouraging things happen, it's not for us to . . . We're not johnny-one-note or one-trick pony on this side of the House. If we see something good, we're going to call it up.

But again the other individuals on the commission, that they're coming forward. But I just wanted to mention those three individuals, Mr. Speaker, as people that I know something about, know something about both as individuals and what they've done in their professional lives, and looking forward to see how the commission rolls out with them putting their shoulders to the wheel. And again I guess closing off this sort of

segment of my comments, Mr. Speaker, to say thank you to them for offering up their passion and their expertise to make sure that as good a job can be done on this commission as is possible. So we're glad to see that, Mr. Speaker.

But again the question of mixed martial arts generally and the proper regulation thereof is a fairly contentious question, Mr. Speaker, and there are necessary and absolutely urgent questions to be answered around the way that the whole question of head trauma is taken care of in all kinds of different professional sports.

In the last number of years, Mr. Speaker, we've seen the question of head trauma coming to the fore in professional hockey, in professional football, and certainly in boxing, Mr. Speaker. Head trauma has long, long been part of the question about whether or not this is something that people should be doing and how to properly regulate it.

We'll be watching very closely to see how those questions are addressed in the legislation, looking for reassurance in the committee stage I'm sure, Mr. Speaker. But I guess what I'd like to do at this stage is to go through the second reading speech of the minister and pull out some of the things there that I think bear greater reflection and examination. And then, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to turn to the legislation itself and draw some of that into question or into greater examination.

In the minister's second reading speech he referenced the fact that, "Saskatchewan was one of only three provinces that had not taken the necessary steps to sanction professional combative sports events, including mixed martial arts and boxing." And states further:

Without a mechanism that sanctions and oversees professional combative sports events in Saskatchewan, promoters may stage unsanctioned events and hold them without appropriate standards or safety precautions that help protect participants and spectators.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the minister rightfully pointed to the fact that this is a question that has been on the plate for regulators in Saskatchewan for quite some time, the way that this has already been brought forward and the request for action has proceeded from municipalities and from the big city mayors' caucus here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. One aspect of that in terms of the appropriate jurisdictions and how different venues relate into this question, Mr. Speaker, something that the minister's second reading speech was silent on I believe, but it begs the question, is the question of how this relates to events that might take place on-reserve or on First Nations. It'll be interesting to see how that is anticipated or dealt with in the legislation or not, whether any consultation has taken place with the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] or individual tribal councils or First Nations.

And again how that question of proper regulation in the province of Saskatchewan, if we're going to be taking a border-to-border approach on this, Mr. Speaker, what anticipation the Government of Saskatchewan is making as regards the holding of mixed martial arts or combative sports events on-reserve. We'll be interested to see what sort of anticipation or consideration of that has been made.

Carrying on in the second reading speech, Mr. Speaker, the minister stated that:

... this legislation is not about promoting mixed martial arts as a sport, but about regulating it. By regulating this sport, we help eliminate illegal fights putting athletes and, in some cases, children, Mr. Speaker, at risk.

Again, Mr. Speaker, there's one of the fundamental questions that government gets to wrestle with from time to time, is the question of regulation. And if you're going to be regulating something, if you're going to be regulating a societal trend, something of which there's a greater incidence taking place, you know, which is obviously the case of the rise of mixed martial arts, the way that this has grown in popularity and in participation, how you properly regulate that and whether or not you're putting in place the proper oversight, proper procedures, proper protocols or if you're going to continue to turn a blind eye or turn away from solidly addressing these questions, there comes a time when a government has to step forward and make those decisions. And again given that we are one of three provincial jurisdictions that have not taken the steps to sanction these type of events, obviously that question was coming due.

And how the regulation either impacts or makes for a safer engagement on this front, Mr. Speaker, and then in terms of, you know, the enforcement regime attached to it, we'll see how this plays out in the days ahead. But as I'd referenced earlier, I have some encouragement from the fact of the individuals who have been appointed to this commission to get this work off the ground.

Again referring to the minister's second reading speech:

... amendments were made recently to the Criminal Code which had implications for Saskatchewan. Bill S-209 was passed in June 2013. This bill amends section 83 of the Criminal Code, legalizing the sport of mixed martial arts across Canada under the authority of a provincial athletics commission or similar established body.

Carrying on in the quote:

... the changes to the Criminal Code provided our province with clarity and an ideal opportunity to put legislation in place to regulate the legitimate side of the sport yet shut down the unsanctioned events that put participants at risk of serious injury.

Again, Mr. Speaker, that question of regulation and events that are ongoing, we would be interested to hear from the minister, and I imagine at committee stage, what the incidence of unsanctioned events has been like, what the experience to date in Saskatchewan has been, and what kind of number or frequency of events that would meet the criteria outlined there. Again as relates to the federal legislation, Mr. Speaker, what kind of interaction the province had, what kind of representation the province made to advance that Saskatchewan interest as that federal law was coming down the line, and what sort of lessons can be learned from other jurisdictions. All those questions bear answers, Mr. Speaker.

So the ... [inaudible interjection] ... I hear my friend across

the way, the member from Cypress Hills, hitting an oldie but a goody. You know, you pause to take a drink of water and the heckle goes, I've never seen a windmill run on water before. But I certainly have heard that heckle before, Mr. Speaker, and I never tire of it nor the member for Cypress Hills' delivery thereof.

But returning to my comments, Mr. Speaker. The government, quote again from the minister's second reading speech:

... this government has committed to establishing a provincial athletics commission. The commission will hold the authority to sanction professional boxing and mixed martial arts events. This commission will be designed to ensure a consistent standard of qualifications, rules, regulations, and safety protocols for all participants and officials across the province. Furthermore, the commission will have the authority to provide protocols for licence applications, event permits, as well as the terms and conditions of a particular event.

And again, Mr. Speaker, in terms of in the case of AJ Scales or in the case of Pat Fiacco, two individuals that have substantial experience both from the athletic participant side of the equation, but also from the promoter, regulator, officiating standpoint, those are two individuals well placed to provide expert advice as this commission does its work and gets established and gets rolling. And again good to see Mayor Eaton in the mix there, bringing that municipal perspective and the perspective of somebody that is making government work for people.

[16:45]

Again returning to the minister's second reading speech:

It also ensures that competitors participate in appropriate pre-fight medical testing such as blood tests, concussion screening, and eye exams. It ensures that qualified medical staff and event officials are hired, that promoters and competitors have the proper licences, and that promoters have suitable liability insurance.

Again, Mr. Speaker, all of these conditions — if you're going to, if we're going to as a society proceed with mixed martial arts and the interest is there, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to appropriately regulate that activity as a society — all of these activities as outlined in the minister's second reading speech in the portion I just referenced are critical, again in terms of the pre-fight medical testing, in terms of ensuring qualified medical staff and event officials being hired, and that promoters and competitors have the proper licences and that promoters have suitable liability insurance.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this is, this is a dangerous thing. This is a dangerous sport and I don't think it is alarmist or stretches the point in any way, shape, or form to say that this is an activity from which serious, life-altering damage can arise. And again if you've got ... If you don't have the regulation and you don't have the proper protocol in place, then what is by its very nature a risky endeavour, Mr. Speaker, becomes that much more so. And the chance for lasting damage, physically the last, you know, possible fatality, again it's not stretching the point that if

you look through the history of boxing alone, Mr. Speaker, it is not ... The question of death in the ring is not a farfetched one or alarmist. It's a real and present danger within the sport and if you're not taking the appropriate steps, it becomes an evermore urgent, evermore risky proposition for the individuals to be participating in the activity.

And again, Mr. Speaker, if these are trained athletes, they're individuals that have put a fair amount of work and passion and training into getting into the octagon, Mr. Speaker, or into the boxing ring, but again it's a ... If we're going to make this as safe and as best regulated as is humanly possible, Mr. Speaker, these are all rightful questions to be entertained and acted upon by the commission.

Carrying on in the second reading speech, Mr. Speaker, the minister states:

The commission will also be responsible for tracking competitors' fighting histories and ensuring safety protocols are enforced. The proposed commission will consist of five individuals, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport will appoint an athletics commissioner who is to be an employee of the ministry. The minister will also establish an advisory committee of three subject matter experts. The Lieutenant Governor in Council will appoint an adjudicator who will be responsible to consider appeals for administrative penalties, licences, and event permits.

Again, Mr. Speaker, how this is operationalized, how this is executed are questions of vital importance, and whether or not it's properly resourced to do the job, the fairly significant job that is set out before it in Bill No. 108, that will tell the tale of the effectiveness of this commission. And again we'll be looking to see how that rolls out. In terms of the commission itself, in terms of the commissioner, in terms of the subject matter, advisory committee experts, and in terms of the adjudicator, we'll be looking to see that these things are properly functioning, and how that carries forward.

Again in the second reading speech, Mr. Speaker:

My ministry has been working with stakeholders to ensure the legislation and regulations have proper protocols and clauses in place to operate an effective and successful commission. Ministry officials have been working closely with the Ministry of Justice and stakeholders who are closely impacted by this issue. Other provincial jurisdictions and commissions have also been consulted with and primarily include individuals from British Columbia, Ontario, and Manitoba.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we're always glad to see when the example and the experience of other jurisdictions is being considered and benefited from by the provincial government. It's not that Saskatchewan's got any shortage of innovation or good public policy, Mr. Speaker, but it's always I think the test of a province to be looking without, making sure that we're not just nurturing these approaches within the province, but making sure that we're learning and benefiting from the experiences in other jurisdictions as regards to best practices, as regards to the experience of the rollout of something like the Athletics

Commission contained herein. So again that is something that I look to in this legislation. We'll look to gain greater detail as to the specific sort of impact of the experience in those jurisdictions and how it is then translated into the legislation that is here before us today.

Carrying on in the speech, Mr. Speaker:

Five of the seven provinces that regulate . . . MMA [mixed martial arts] events have provincial commissions. From speaking with provinces across Canada, we know provincial commissions are proving to be the most effective governance model. According to provincial jurisdictions, establishing a provincial athletics commission provides a number of benefits including consistency in rules, regulations, and processes across the province; enhanced ability to hold large-scale events; potential overall cost efficiencies; and effective use of a limited group of individuals properly qualified and knowledgeable about the sector.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this would seem to, on the face of it, make good sense, you know, making sure you've got that right mix between mission and mandates, making sure that the task that presents itself is being properly addressed. And again in terms of having a province-wide commission that addresses these questions, I think there's some good sense to that.

I'd be interested to know more about the other jurisdictions — the minority of jurisdictions, I would acknowledge — wherein this has been a municipally led, in the main question, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the benefits that are there to be observed. You know, what holds the provincial approach over the municipal approach? And in a province of 1.1 million people, Mr. Speaker, again logically there'd be some benefits that accrue between striking that balance between, you know, having that province-wide jurisdiction, that province-wide scope in mandate, as well as addressing the activities as they present across the province.

But it would be good to hear specifically what was considered about the other jurisdictions, again in the minority, but the other jurisdictions where they have a different approach. What are the benefits of that and what ultimately led to deciding against adopting that approach and instead going with the provincial focus to this legislation? But the questions that are anticipated by the commission in terms of the benefit of consistency in rules, regulations, and processes across the province, very important for . . . You know, we've got no end of geography, Mr. Speaker. But if you get into sort of jurisdiction chopping and one municipality versus the other, it's the way that that could roll out.

We think that that's a potential gain to be had in province-wide jurisdiction being asserted and regulated in this body. But with that again comes a number of questions as regards to jurisdiction and what anticipation has been made again in a province like Saskatchewan. What sort of anticipation and consultation has been made with the First Nations people in this province and the way that First Nations jurisdiction on-reserve ties into this broader question? That needs an answer, Mr. Speaker.

But again the question of enhanced ability to hold large-scale events in terms of, you know . . . That potential is out there, the interest is there, and having a commission equal to that task again would seem to, on the face of it, make some sense. The potential overall cost efficiencies again seem a reasonable proposition. And the effective use of a limited group of individuals properly qualified and knowledgeable about the sector, again, if prologue is indeed . . . if past is indeed prologue that they've got individuals like AJ Scales and Pat Fiacco on the commission, that should bode well for again effective use of a limited group of individuals properly qualified and knowledgeable about the sector because Pat Fiacco and AJ Scales certainly are that, knowledgeable and properly qualified about the sector.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to provide an overview from the . . . Again quoting from the minister's second reading speech:

I also want to provide an overview of what the legislation will outline. The legislation frames areas such as responsibilities and powers of the commissioner, licensing and event permits, security deposits, inspections and investigations, administrative penalties, appeals, and the regulations necessary for this Act. Within the legislation, the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport will also have the authority to apply for a compliance order to prevent individuals from proceeding with an event contrary to the Act and regulations. We want to ensure illegal activity is prevented before occurring.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it would be interesting to have a broader or a more precise understanding of what the experience is in other jurisdictions, whether or not the mechanism of a compliance order administered by the minister, if that is indeed the experience in other jurisdictions. What is the frequency with which such compliance orders are issued and what other sort of penalties attach to that compliance order, Mr. Speaker? All this will be interesting to contemplate in the days and weeks ahead.

And it also begs the question, quite frankly, of resources. And last I checked I'm not sure that the Ministry of — I want to call it culture and youth — but the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, what resources the minister has to deploy in terms of the enforcement side of this regime remains to be seen, Mr. Speaker. And are there individuals currently within the ministry that can perform this function? Is there a need for new hirings?

All of these things again, Mr. Speaker, it's fine to write it down in legislation, but legislation begs enforcement. And to enforce the provisions of this legislation of course will require resources and how the question of resources has been addressed by this government. What's being anticipated by the minister for this new task being set out in front of this commission remains to be seen. And we await the greater detail on that from the minister.

The close of the minister's remarks . . . There's a lot of interest on the other side, Mr. Speaker, and they keep calling for more, so we'll come back after supper and oblige them.

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

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

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Premier
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Bill Boyd

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

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff

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

Hon. Kevin Doherty

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

Hon. June Draude

Minister of Social Services
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Dustin Duncan

Minister of Health

Hon. Donna Harpauer

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

Hon. Nancy Heppner

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

Hon. Ken Krawetz

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Minister of Finance

Hon. Tim McMillan

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Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan
Minister Responsible for Trade
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated

Hon. Don McMorris

Minister of Highways and Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Telecommunications
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation
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Hon. Randy Weekes

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