



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

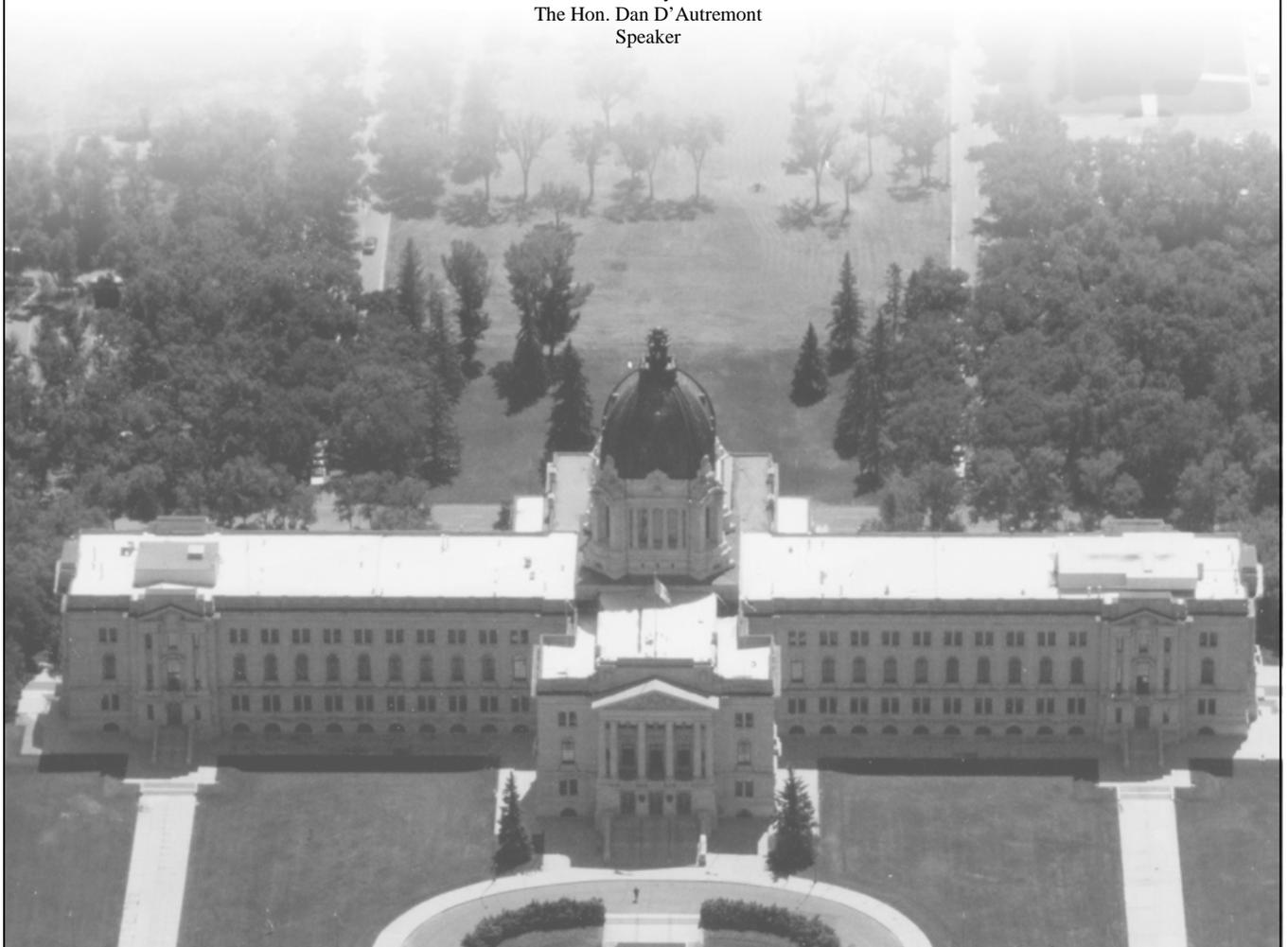
of the

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 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure today to introduce actually two groups that are joining from my constituency. It's rare that we get visitors from as far west as Lloydminster area but the first is the reeve of the RM [rural municipality] of Frenchman Butte, is Bonnie Mills-Midgley. She is joined by Tom Hougham, a councillor, and their administrator, Bryson Leganchuk.

The second group, Mr. Speaker, that is joining us is from the RM of Wilton. From the RM of Wilton we have the administrator, Darren Elder. We have councillors Sharon Carruthers, Tim Sawarin, Ron Clark, and Rupert Tarleton.

I would like all members to join me in welcoming them to their Assembly and thanking them for their service to the communities in and around Lloydminster. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to this Assembly, it's my pleasure to introduce a good friend of mine in your gallery, Norm McIntyre. Norm is from Wiseton. He also is here partaking in the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention, has been for the last few days. He's on council for the RM of King George. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, he's a good friend of mine and has been a tremendous support to me in my political career and, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad he joined us at the Assembly. And I would ask all members to please give him a warm welcome. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of education. And we know that education is one of the most vital services that government provides to its citizens, and this government has failed to deliver a long-term plan and vision and the necessary resources to prioritize delivery of educational excellence. The government has failed to deliver a real plan to close the Aboriginal education gap, support English as an additional language students, support community schools and their communities and students.

And we know this government would rather talk about standardized testing than hear from teachers and parents about addressing real needs of today's classrooms. And we know that we must build the best education system for today and for

Saskatchewan's future. I would like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on this government to immediately prioritize education by laying out a long-term vision and plan with the necessary resources to provide the best quality of education for Saskatchewan that reflects Saskatchewan's demographic and population changes, that is based on proven educational best practices and that is developed through consultation with the education sector and that builds strong educational infrastructure to serve students and communities long into the future.

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

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

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of residents of the province that are concerned about the improper reporting of our finances. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

The petitions today are signed by concerned residents from Yorkton and Regina. I so submit.

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 point out that the gym at Sacred Heart Community School in north central Regina is now quite literally falling apart, has been closed indefinitely, and is no longer safe for students or staff.

They point out that the school and the community have raised this issue with the Sask Party provincial government without resolution since 2007. They also point out that enrolment has increased by 100-plus students over the past four years at Sacred Heart and that attendance and learning outcomes are steadily improving. And they point out, Mr. Speaker, that as a matter of basic fairness and common sense, the students of Sacred Heart Community School need 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 the Sask Party provincial government to immediately commit to the replacement of the gymnasium of Sacred Heart Community School.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens from Regina, from north central Regina. I so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Sochi 2014 Paralympic Winter Games

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all Canadian athletes attending the Sochi 2014 Paralympic Games and in particular our athletes from Saskatchewan.

Even though the geopolitical situation is complicated, the courage and dedication of these athletes simply can't be overshadowed. The Sochi 2014 Paralympic Winter Games, which run from March 7th to 16th this year, are a true inspiration to people across our province and our country. Approximately 575 athletes from 45 countries are participating in these Paralympic Games. The games include a number of disciplines including para-nordic skiing, sledge hockey, para-alpine skiing, biathlon, para-snowboarding, and wheelchair curling.

I'm proud to congratulate our Saskatchewan athletes, Andrea Bundon from Regina, Kaspar Wirz from Saskatoon, Curtis Hunt from Regina, Colette Bourgonje from Porcupine Plain, Brittany Hudak from Prince Albert, and Kurt Oatway from Regina. We are proud that Saskatchewan is a place where, regardless of abilities, athletes can reach their goals.

These are difficult and trying times in the Black Sea region, but our paralympians have worked incredibly hard, and we're proud to see they are building on the energetic accomplishments of our Canadian Olympic team. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Deputy Whip.

Z99 Cares Radiothon

Mr. Makowsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are few things as exciting as waiting for the arrival of a newborn baby. It is a tremendous journey filled with many joyful moments.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there are occasions that unexpected complications arise and some babies are born needing special care. Moments like this are what make the Z99 Cares Radiothon such an important event in our community. Mr. Speaker, today the 27th edition of this annual event kicks off at the Cornwall Centre in downtown Regina. For 36 straight hours, CC, Lorie, and Buzz will broadcast live to raise money for the neonatal intensive care unit in the Rawlco centre for mother baby care at the Regina General Hospital.

To date the radiothon has raised over \$5.75 million for the Hospitals of Regina Foundation. This year the money raised will purchase Giraffe isolettes to keep babies warm and

protected, Giraffe Warmers to maintain babies' temperatures, an X-ray machine, feeding pumps, and milk warmers.

The support for this event spreads far into Regina's community, with several organizations making generous donations and hosting events and fundraisers with the proceeds going to the radiothon.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in recognizing the outstanding efforts of the event organizers and volunteers, CC, Lorie, and Buzz, and the generous contributors within our community. Best of wishes to another successful event. Thank you.

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

Brain Awareness Week

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday marked the beginning of Brain Awareness Week. In Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Brain Injury Association has also designated March as Brain Awareness Month.

Brain Awareness Week was founded in 1997 by the Dana Alliance for the brain in efforts to bring together scientists, families, schools, and communities to raise public awareness of the progress and benefits of brain research.

Brain Awareness Week has a particular focus on degenerative diseases and memory loss. For families with a loved one with Alzheimer's or other illnesses such as Parkinson's and epilepsy, the more light brought to these issues, the better, Mr. Speaker.

Every March, Brain Awareness Week unites partner organizations worldwide as they work together to help families and individuals of all ages find better solutions for healthier brains. In Saskatchewan, efforts to raise awareness have been focused on brain injuries, spearheaded by the Saskatchewan Brain Injury Association.

For people under 44 in our province, brain injuries are the number one killer and disabler of people. Sadly one of the only measures to combat this type of issue is prevention. There are no treatments or techniques that can cure a brain injury. We must all support widespread prevention and stand with the grassroots associations to raise awareness and show support for survivors and their families.

I ask all members of the Assembly to recognize the importance of Brain Awareness Week so we can work together to make the lives of those living with brain injury and disease that much easier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Rural Women's Month

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to recognize Rural Women's Month. This month we recognize the significant contributions that rural women have made to Saskatchewan from past to the present.

Rural women have always played a tremendous role in shaping, growing, and caring for our great province. Whether they are farm managers, small-business owners, or loving mothers, they always have been the heart of rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, this month we celebrate rural women of all ages and from all backgrounds, including First Nations and Métis women. They are the volunteers in our churches, schools, and hospital boards, the members of our 4-H sports and clubs, agriculture societies, and they are leaders in our small communities. They continue to be resourceful, resilient, compassionate, and key agents of economic, political, and social development across Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, as a former reeve, I have seen the tremendous impact that rural women can make in society and in Saskatchewan. We are so lucky to have these amazing and strong women in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all rural women for the hard work that they contribute to their communities, and I ask that all members join me in celebrating Rural Women's Month. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities Convention

Mr. Phillips: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to share some of the highlights of the 109th annual SARM convention which took place in Regina this week. It's so nice to see some of the delegates here today.

I want to start by thanking the president of SARM, Mr. Dave Marit, for his positive comments about the Premier's action on the grain file, which were met with a huge round of applause.

At this convention there were over 1,500 delegates, Mr. Speaker, and that's a very, very good turnout. There was a large tradeshow, plenty of opportunities for stakeholders to connect and network with fellow colleagues as well as government members and ministry staff.

Some of the strongest drivers of our growing economy come from our rural areas, be it our agricultural sector or our natural resources sector. SARM and its many councillors, administrators, Reeves, and mayors that comprise the association certainly embody the principles of the association, and they're all doing their part to guide and contribute to our ever-growing rural economy.

I ask all members to join with me in thanking SARM and our rural leaders for working with us to meet the challenges of growth in our province and for their dedication and commitment to building a strong Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

King of Kielbasa

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The constituency of Martensville is one of the fastest growing areas

not only in our province but in the entire country. With that growth comes new business opportunities to the communities that I have the privilege to represent. The majority of these businesses are independent and locally owned. And I'm happy to rise today to recognize one of the outstanding businesses in the city of Martensville.

Several years ago, Trent Ens opened Smokehaus Meats & Deli in that community. People in this city know that Trent's store is the go-to place for a variety of homemade products. This last February, Trent was named the King of Kielbasa at the 13th annual competition at Prairieland exhibition in Saskatoon. He beat out 11 others to gain this title, and I want to congratulate Trent and his team on his recent win. This is not the first for Trent. In 2009 he also gained the status of overall winner and was crowned king.

But Trent is about more than just winning competitions. In 2009, he sent 2,500 packages of beef and bison jerky to our Canadian troops serving in Afghanistan. I want to thank Trent for his big heart and his willingness to show his appreciation to our Canadian Armed Forces and also to congratulate him on regaining his status as king.

[10:15]

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

Cigar Lake Mine in Production

Mr. Doke: — Mr. Speaker, Cigar Lake was known for too long as the world's richest undeveloped uranium deposit. Today that has changed with the first uranium ore production from the Cigar Lake mine. Up to 1,000 people worked at the site during construction, and the mine will employ more than 600 highly skilled workers primarily from northern Saskatchewan. These jobs are in addition to the 3,500 people uranium mines already employ in Saskatchewan. Almost half of those jobs are filled by First Nations people.

Our government recognized the importance of the uranium industry by implementing a new, more competitive royalty system that accurately reflects the investments industry is making. Last year, industries spent over 122 million on uranium exploration. This is a hallmark to the competitive, investment climate Saskatchewan has to offer.

We currently produce just over 15 per cent of the world's uranium, and I look forward to watching that number continue to climb upward as production increases at this new mine. Along with the competitive business climate, we have the best uranium resources in the world. Cigar Lake is the world's second-largest high-grade uranium deposit with grades that are 100 times the world average. In total, Saskatchewan's recoverable uranium resources are the energy equivalent to 23 billion barrels of oil.

I would like to congratulate Cameco and Areva on their ore production at Cigar Lake, and I look forward to many more years of growth of the Saskatchewan uranium industry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Consultant Fees and Lean Initiative

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In just the last two years, the Ministry of Health has spent \$20.2 million dollars on John Black and Associates. Over \$3.6 million has gone just to cover the travel costs for John Black and Associates. That's just in the last two years. I understand, Mr. Speaker, that the Ministry of Health will spend a total of about \$40 million on John Black and Associates. My question is for the Premier: how much money in total will taxpayers spend flying John Black and Associates around?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The investment in lean with the consultants that have been referenced by the Leader of the Opposition is roughly \$10 million a year over four years.

Mr. Speaker, we've already saved more than that. As a result of the lean initiatives. Mr. Speaker, we've saved \$35 million in the new blood and plasma products management system alone — just in that one leaned-out project, \$35 million. We have saved millions of dollars in the design of health care facilities, including the new children's hospital our government is building. And it's true as well at the new hospital in Moose Jaw that our government is building as well, Mr. Speaker.

But lean is not just about money. Lean is also about providing better quality care for Saskatchewan people. And I'm sure we'll get into that in the debate. But we can point to specific results at the disease control lab in terms of the reduction in turnaround time for test results. We can talk specifically about how we're now better managing the absenteeism in the workplace, Mr. Speaker. No wonder NDP [New Democratic Party] Manitoba is now moving forward with lean as well.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, greater efficiency is a good thing. But you cannot tell me that spending \$40 million on having US [United States] consultants come to the province, Mr. Speaker, and tell us how to run our province is something that we cannot be doing ourselves. Mr. Speaker, we are the province that invented medicare. Surely we have the ingenuity to strengthen it and the ingenuity to improve it.

The minister did not answer my question, which was a very direct question. We know that in just the last two years the Ministry of Health, Mr. Speaker, has spent \$3.6 million just to cover the travel costs of John Black and Associates, — just the last two years. My question again to the Premier: how much money in total will taxpayers spend in flying John Black and Associates around?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — So, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition stands up and says, surely we can just do this

ourselves. Then why didn't they for 16 years? Why didn't they find \$1.3 million in savings in the management of vaccines? Why didn't they find a way to save \$35 million in blood and plasma inventory management? Mr. Speaker, these consultants are the reputed best in the world. They travel around the world and do this work. The total cost I've already stated. We've already saved more than the total cost investment, Mr. Speaker.

But there's more good news. There's more good news. Forty-two per cent of the appointments that were cancelled, the majority by the clinic, now there are zero cancelled in RQHR [Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region]. Went from 42 per cent cancellation of appointments to zero as a result of us listening to the front-line staff, aided by the consultant, and as a result of the lean process being applied. Only 15 per cent of calls were handled by a clinician prior to that. Now 85 per cent of calls are handled by a clinician. Four hundred clients on the wait-list — this is RQHR — in '12-13. Now there's only 70, Mr. Speaker. I hope there's more question because the list goes on.

You bet we made an investment in lean. It's delivering results. We've saved more. There's better care. No wonder NDP Manitoba is now pursuing Saskatchewan lean as well.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard about Ron Caron who was told he can't go into long-term care because his needs are too great and there aren't the resources, there aren't the staff available to care for his needs.

Last week we heard, Mr. Speaker, how this government forced facilities to slash their urgent requests for desperately needed equipment, repairs, and staff. This government, Mr. Speaker, says it doesn't have the money to fix the basics. Yet at the same time, they have \$40 million to be spending on US consultants to come to Saskatchewan and tell us how to fix our health care system, Mr. Speaker. And the ministry in just the last two years has spent \$3.6 million on flying John Black and Associates around.

My question to the Premier: how many additional health care providers could be working in the province for the \$40 million being paid to US consultants?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the direct answer to my hon. friend's question is this. Because of decisions taken by this government which include, by the way, applying lean to the health care system, because of that the answer to his question is, how about 1,000 more nurses working today than there was before? How about 200-plus more doctors practising today in the province? Mr. Speaker, how about 68 per cent reduction in the Sask Disease Control Laboratory in terms of their turnaround time for test results because of lean?

How about, Mr. Speaker, faster diagnostic imaging for acute care patients in the Prince Albert Parkland Region; in fact, 66 per cent reduction in the time from when a diagnostic image test is ordered for patients to when the test is completed? Under the NDP, who thought everything was fine and they could find all these efficiencies within their own I guess plans, Mr. Speaker,

notwithstanding that they were closing facilities and not staffing up, we had a 66 per cent higher period of time between those diagnostic image testing and the time they needed to consult with the physician, Mr. Speaker.

We've got more examples. We're going to continue with lean. We'll make this investment because it is providing better care, and it is saving more money than the consultants will cost. No wonder the province of Manitoba is pursuing lean for their health care system there.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, for the \$40 million that this government is spending on US consultants, they could have hired 800 more care aids. Even for just the travel costs they're spending on flying John Black and Associates around, Mr. Speaker, they could have hired 72 more care aids. And this is just a drop in the bucket. It doesn't include all of the other lean spending in other ministries, Mr. Speaker, on other contracts and through the health regions.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure there are good aspects to lean. But surely, Mr. Speaker, we can spend a few million dollars, buy the manual, train some people, and prevent this from becoming a cash cow for US consultants.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: how much money in total is this government spending on lean consultants, and why isn't it putting that money into fixing the basics in health care, the basics in seniors' care?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — The Minister of the Economy is asking if there's such a thing as lean for dummies. And I don't know if there is or not in terms of that manual. We're frankly open to every possible resource.

Mr. Speaker, we can either take the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Opposition who believes we shouldn't be pursuing lean, even though his counterparts in Manitoba believe that we should be doing lean because they're going to do it. Or we could take the advice of Rosalee Longmoore when she was president of SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] and said, "A focus on patient- and family-centred care using best practice evidence and Lean principles will improve the patient experience and return nursing to a rewarding career," Mr. Speaker.

Here's what Louise Frederick, a patient team member said, "This experience, the lean experience, is very empowering. I am confident patients are being listened to. This is a game changer for patients." That's a front-line worker. Mr. Speaker, we have health care professionals, we have doctors, we have patients saying, we've got to keep doing this. It saves money to the system and provides better care. Why in the world would the Leader of the Opposition be opposed to that?

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

Malfunction in Parks Reservation System

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Parks admitted earlier this week that the government has yet to identify about 500 people who were overbilled by the campsite reservation system. Despite being able to charge their credit cards, the government doesn't have their contact information.

Back in 2012, the former minister of Parks said this about the new privatized system: "This new system will transform how we interact and do business with our customers." Oh, Mr. Speaker, it's definitely been transformative, overbilling at least 1,500 people and not even knowing who 500 of those people are.

To the minister: will he just admit it was a mistake to privatize this campsite reservation system, and will he serve notice to the Ontario company to cancel their contract?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Mr. Speaker, I never said anything of the sort. I never once said, Mr. Speaker, in any of the scrums outside the media or questions answered in this House, that we couldn't identify the cardholders with respect to the overcharging of their credit cards. I never said that once. We've contacted them, Mr. Speaker, on a proactive basis, for the last 10 days.

What we don't have, maybe the opposition has a different view of this, what we don't have is their financial information on file, Mr. Speaker. We need them to provide the financial information for us to work with the service provider and Moneris to refund the overcharges on their credit cards, Mr. Speaker. Those are the facts.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, when this government privatized the campsite booking system to an out-of-province company, it claimed to be "... moving Saskatchewan provincial parks into a leaner and more customer-focused model of service delivery." The government said, "Taking a lean approach as a first step paved the way for a simpler, more efficient reservation system."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the lean term for accurate billing of customers is, but that's not happening with this new system, and Saskatchewan campers are rightfully frustrated as a result. To the minister: will this government just admit that the privatized campsite reservation system is failing Saskatchewan campers, and will it commit today to fix the system?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member opposite fails to mention is that in the last 10 days we've had over 26,000 reservations successfully completed on this system, Mr. Speaker. What the member opposite fails to recognize, we've had over 60,000 camping nights booked on our reservation system, Mr. Speaker, for this upcoming camping

season.

This particular company, we are in negotiations with them with respect to the damages that are going to be received back to the Government of Saskatchewan for the overcharging of those particular customers. This was a malfunction of an interface process, Mr. Speaker. I have taken full responsibility for that. We are going to fix that.

Now let's contrast that. Let's go back to the days when the member for Athabasca was the minister responsible for Parks, Mr. Speaker. When the member for Athabasca was the minister responsible for Parks, he made an announcement on fee increases, Mr. Speaker. He made an announcement on fee increases. When did he do that, Mr. Speaker? He did it on May 15th in 2000. The parks opened on May 18th in 2000, Mr. Speaker. We're not going back to those days.

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

Grain Transportation

Ms. Sproule: — With the ides of March fast approaching, Mr. Speaker, I come not to praise Gerry Ritz but to condemn him for his failure to stand up for Canadian grain producers.

Mr. Speaker, federal Agriculture minister Gerry Ritz is in town today. And what did this government decide to do? They decided to bring forward a ridiculous motion this afternoon that once again pats Gerry Ritz on the back. This is unbelievable. All that Gerry Ritz has done lately is force the big railway companies to do what they were going to do anyways.

To the minister: why is this government continually patting Gerry Ritz on the back when his solution is way too little, way too late?

[10:30]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Well I've been accused of a lot of things in my relationship with Gerry Ritz, but this is the first time I've ever been accused of continually patting him on the back. But I'm happy about that in this instance.

In this instance, the federal government is on the right track. They are in the process of developing emergency legislation that will be introduced in a couple of weeks that will force the railroads to actually deliver a reasonable level of service that will be adequate to move Saskatchewan grain crops.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, that minister should read Lloyd Wagner's letter in the paper yesterday. It said, "The average grain farmer in the West has taken a great loss." He goes on to say that the price he was offered for his wheat is lower than what he could have made 40 years ago.

A producer in an online agricultural forum says, "The \$100,000

a day fine wouldn't cover what some farmers gave up in lost revenue in this year because of this mess. It kind of puts it into perspective, doesn't it?" And we also know, Mr. Speaker, that Hunter Harrison makes over \$132,000 a day.

Producers are frustrated because they did their part to produce a bumper crop only to have this government and the federal government drop the ball and treat the big rail companies with kid gloves. To the minister: why is this government bending over backwards to praise Gerry Ritz instead of pressuring him to get the job done for producers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's been our understanding for the last number of days since the OC [order in council] was passed last Friday that the \$100,000-a-day fine is a placeholder. The 11,000-car requirement is a placeholder. These things may be quite different in the legislation that comes forth in a week or two. And we're frankly, frankly we're asking for more, Mr. Speaker. We're asking for substantially more cars and larger fines.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be more helpful for the NDP to actually become engaged in support of this move and to offer their suggestions also to the federal government than to simply do what they usually do — always do, I might say — lay in the weeds and take cheap political shots at home.

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

Transfer of Pasture Land

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, it's not just on grain transportation that we've seen this government refuse to stand up to Gerry Ritz. They've done it on the community pastures too.

In response to Ritz's abandonment of this important program, the Manitoba government recently created a \$1 million fund for the newly formed Association of Manitoba Community Pastures. The fund will help them purchase the trucks and equipment that Ritz is demanding payment for and to help them transition the management of the pastures. Manitoba clearly understands the importance of the pastures and the need for a strong provincial organization to manage them into the future.

Instead of continuing to ignore the Saskatchewan Community Pasture Patrons Association, will the minister do the right thing and provide them with the necessary transitional funding in the upcoming budget?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Well, Mr. Speaker, \$1 million, that is pretty impressive.

We in Saskatchewan have 61 pastures, federal PFRA [Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration] pastures, that are coming back to the patron control, and we're providing \$120,000 for each one of them, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for Credit Unions

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, in the lead up to the budget, credit union members from across the province have been asking some questions of that government's commitments as it relates to credit unions. And they're owed some answers. If this government follows the federal government's lead and hikes credit unions' taxes, it'll have a ripple effect across our provincial economy, and particularly so in rural communities where credit unions are the backbone of agricultural and the small-business community. They provide more than 50 per cent of the lending to small- and medium-sized businesses in Saskatchewan who are certainly drivers of our economy.

To the minister: will he commit today to protect the important role credit unions play within Saskatchewan and clearly commit to not hiking their taxes in next week's budget?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, on the advice of my colleague beside me, no I will not release the budget six days early.

Mr. Speaker, there have been a lot of contacts. I have met with numerous officials with the credit union system across all of Saskatchewan. Individual MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] have received correspondence, have received phone calls, and have had great discussions with credit union leaders all across the province.

Mr. Speaker, last year everyone, including people in the credit union system, were surprised by the federal government's immediate move to remove the credit that credit unions had, that exemption. Mr. Speaker, last year we made that decision that for the year 2013 we were going to remain and allow the credit unions to continue to have that exemption for that year.

Mr. Speaker, we're continuing, over the last four months, to have discussions to look at what advantage credit unions have, Mr. Speaker, with those exemptions. And they're a substantial amount, Mr. Speaker. There are around \$14 million worth of exemption that the credit unions now receive on an annual basis.

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

Reporting of Provincial Finances

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Just on that matter, I hope the minister recognizes the different environment for credit unions, the different capital environment for them. And certainly credit unions from across Saskatchewan and their members in the communities they serve deserve better answers than that.

We already know that this government is the first government in all of Saskatchewan's history to actually fail an audit of its GRF [General Revenue Fund] books. In fact this is the first government in Canadian history to fail an audit of its GRF books. The auditor says, the material misstatements and errors in the financial statements are pervasive and that the books are

not accurate.

To the minister: has the government decided to listen to the auditor yet, or will it shamefully introduce a budget next week that will once again fail the auditor's scrutiny?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear to the people of Saskatchewan that the system that we currently follow is the exact same system that was introduced by the NDP in 2004, Mr. Speaker.

We do two things. In 2004 the NDP government at the time introduced a system where we actually provide a summary budget, Mr. Speaker. We also have what is referred to as an operating chequebook side or, as we refer to it as, the General Revenue Fund side, Mr. Speaker. We've also done that just like the NDP did.

Mr. Speaker, there is a difference of opinion. Financial auditors within the Ministry of Finance disagree with what the auditor has said regarding co-ownership. Mr. Speaker, there's also a disagreement about whether or not universities should be part of our General Revenue Fund.

Mr. Speaker, all summaries across provinces are all different, Mr. Speaker. Alberta, as the member knows, just released the budget, Mr. Speaker, and in fact they have three sets of books.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it's not simply a matter of difference within the accounting profession. The difference, Mr. Speaker, is the new accounting scheme created by this government, laid out on page 12 of the auditor's report. And the independent accounting community of this province are in support of the auditor's position. Those are all the big, private-sector firms, and it's that minister that has a different opinion than the rest of the accounting community.

Saskatchewan people expect the government to present books that they can trust. They were disturbed when they woke up to headlines that said "Beware the books" back in December. We've had right wing governments before in this province that have made a mess of our province's finances, but we've never had a government in Saskatchewan's history that have failed an audit on their GRF books. History will show that that Premier and that Finance minister have failed that audit, and certainly that's no honour.

To the minister: will he be reconciling last year's books, the ones that failed the audit, so they actually reflect reality and can pass an audit?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the former NDP government, our current government, since 2004-05 produces summary financial statements, Mr. Speaker. Those are part of the budget process. We update those at mid-year, and we do that at budget time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, since 1993-94 there has been an unqualified audit opinion on the summaries. They continued to this very year, Mr. Speaker. You can look directly into the auditor's report, and indeed the auditor has an unqualified opinion on the books of the province of Saskatchewan and says that they are accurate.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, on January 13th the Public Accounts Committee reviewed the failed audit. I put forward motions calling on the government to rectify the failed audit to ensure the province's finances are prepared and presented in compliance with Canadian GAAP [generally accepted accounting principles] and in a manner that's deemed appropriate, reliable, and trustworthy by the independent Provincial Auditor.

Sounds to me like common sense positions, but you know what, Mr. Speaker? Those government members voted against those motions. Let me be clear. For the official opposition and the people of Saskatchewan, nothing short of books they can trust will be acceptable in next week's provincial budget.

To the minister: how can this government, the first government actually to fail an audit, possibly think they can simply refuse to listen to the auditor, fail to fix the problem, and put forward books that can't be trusted once again?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, what we have done for the last seven years is continue with a balanced budget approach, Mr. Speaker. It is extremely important for the people of Saskatchewan to recognize that you have to live within your means.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that that member talks about being open and honest with the people of Saskatchewan. Take a look at the NDP platform of the last election, Mr. Speaker, over \$5 billion worth of promises, Mr. Speaker. Five billion dollars, can you imagine? The member stands in this place and says, well you have to be honest. You have to be open. You have to accept his position, Mr. Speaker, about what we should do.

Mr. Speaker, the summary statements that are produced are audited by the Provincial Auditor. They're published in the Public Accounts document that appears in June. And they have been reliable each and every year, even from the years when that member was part of government, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to do that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Grain Transportation

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the opportunity for taking part in this debate. I think it's important to maybe read into the record the ridiculous

motion that the member from Nutana mentioned here a few minutes ago because I find nothing ridiculous about it at all. The motion says, and I will read this into the record or move this motion at the end of my comments:

That this Assembly supports the Government of Canada in passing an order in council to help address the grain transportation backlog and further supports the swift implementation of emergency legislation to address this issue.

Mr. Speaker, we're showing our support for the federal government to help get the transportation system moving for our grain from the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it's been an interesting year in the province of Saskatchewan. Our producers have grown the biggest crop in the history of this province, and we commend them for that. But at the same time, our railroads are not matching that efficiency and are not moving that grain to port, and at the same time costing our farmers thousands and millions of dollars every day in this province because we can't get our grain to port and actually hurting the prices of the commodities that we're trying to move.

Mr. Speaker, we had a record production of crop in this province in 2013. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we have increased competition for rail capacity from the oil sector, the potash sector, and the container movement across Western Canada. Mr. Speaker, our farmers and ranchers did their part by growing a record crop. Now we need to get it moved to port.

That record crop, Mr. Speaker, was 38.4 million tonnes. It actually exceeded our 2020 Saskatchewan plan for growth, Mr. Speaker, that we had planned for and hoped for, and it's 40 per cent higher than the 2012 production. And it actually is 48 per cent higher than the 10-year average.

[10:45]

So again, Mr. Speaker, our producers have certainly played their part and done their part in growing the crop. Now we need to get it to market. And, Mr. Speaker, the railways certainly are at fault in this situation. I believe that one of the railways, maybe both, are blaming the cold weather and to a degree I guess that may be a problem. But at the other respect, Mr. Speaker, these railways could also put engines in the middle of these trains for braking. We've seen them do that in the past. And, Mr. Speaker, they could certainly be moving a lot more of our product than they have to this point.

So, Mr. Speaker, when the member from Nutana calls this motion ridiculous, I find it amazing, Mr. Speaker. But I guess I shouldn't because I can go back to the record of the NDP for 16 years. And when they had meetings with the railways and when they had meetings with the federal government, in many cases they went for the free doughnuts and had nothing to offer of anything important that would help solve the problems in many of these situations.

And, Mr. Speaker, on many occasions there was problems with the transportation system that we had in this country. This didn't just start this year, Mr. Speaker. This has gone on for

probably the last 50 or 60 years. I did find it interesting, one of the members opposite, in a debate that our Minister of Agriculture had here a few days ago, had made the comment that, should we have the Canadian Wheat Board this problem wouldn't happen.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture from Thunder Creek — and I know myself and I know other members on this side of the House that have been involved in agriculture, maybe haven't been here since the Wheat Board started in the 1940s, although some of us are getting very close, Mr. Speaker — would know that we've had these problems when the Wheat Board was in place and had their monopoly on many, many occasions, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, this isn't something new, but it's something we felt that we had to put pressure on, in number one, the federal government to lobby them to make something happen to get the railways to start moving our product which they certainly have not been doing this year as at times they haven't done in the past.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has set up a group of ministers and the member for Shellbrook, Rosthern-Shellbrook — the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Highways, the Minister of Economy, Mr. Speaker — to work on this file, to get some action. And I think what we see in this motion today and what we get to see, the Minister of Transport federally talked at SARM yesterday. She talked about it. I believe Minister Ritz will be talking about it here today. I think it's very important they come out to SARM and meet with the delegates and see just how important this is to those people, and that's the message that our delegation has put to the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, another comment coming from the NDP when they were being very critical of what this government has done to help solve the problem, really, said we've done nothing. Well I take a little bit of . . . I find that really a problem, Mr. Speaker, because they haven't been paying attention as they usually don't, but there's a number of things that these members have done, Mr. Speaker.

This group has lobbied on behalf of farmers in this province and as we see, we're now starting to get some action. But, Mr. Speaker, this goes back to 2013. May of 2013, Minister of Highways and Agriculture officials met with CP [Canadian Pacific] to outline our targets for the growth for Saskatchewan which includes moving a crop such as we have this year. June 2013, begin to work on a New West Partnership port capacity study. July 24th, 2013, Minister of Agriculture officials met with Mark Hemmes of Quorum. Early October, Mr. Speaker, Minister of Highways and deputy minister of Highways again met with CP in Vancouver on the grain transportation issue.

Mr. Speaker, also in October, deputy minister of Highways toured the Vancouver port and met with Alliance Grain Terminal. October 25th, Highways, Economy, and Agriculture met to talk about what was happening with the movement of commodities at port, and at the time Highways quoted CN [Canadian National] and CP as saying, "They have lots of capacity and there was no constraint at port." Well we would take some umbrage with that, Mr. Speaker.

November 7th, 2013, Minister of Agriculture sent letters to the federal government, railroads, grain companies, and all other stakeholders regarding the record crop and the importance of efficient transportation system. November 2013, Mr. Speaker, deputy minister of Highways met with the federal deputy minister of Transportation to discuss grain transportation issues. November 21st, 2013, Ministry of Highways and Agriculture officials had a conference call with the federal ADM [assistant deputy minister] to discuss these issues.

Mr. Speaker, on November 25th, 2013, our Minister of Agriculture met with CP rail once again. December 6th, 2013, senior Highways, Economy, and Agriculture officials met with CP rail.

Mr. Speaker, on January 20th, 2014, just not long ago here, Ministry of Agriculture officials met with Prairie West Terminal, AGT [Alliance Grain Terminal Ltd.], January 21st, 2014, senior Highway and Agriculture officials met with the Port Metro Vancouver. January 29th, FPT [federal-provincial-territorial] Agriculture DMs [deputy minister] meeting which included discussions on grain transportation. January 31st, 2014, conference call with Pulse Canada and senior ministry officials regarding Pulse Canada's five-year transportation monitoring project being funded by the federal government. February 4th, Minister of Agriculture for the province met with CN again, and CP. February 12th, 2014, the Premier appointed our delegation that I talked about earlier to put pressure on the federal government and the railways and everyone connected with the moving of our grain to get it moving, Mr. Speaker.

February 13, our Agriculture minister from the province and Highway officials held conference calls with Sask producers. February 13th, also the same day, a delegation met with Viterra. February 14th, the delegation met with the Western Grain Elevators Association, Viterra, Cargill, Richardson, Parrish & Heimbecker, and Louis Dreyfus Canada. The delegation met with CN rail on February 20th of 2014.

So you can see, Mr. Speaker, and there's more. But the list goes on of all the meetings and all the lobbying that's gone on from this government, Mr. Speaker. Unlike past governments under the NDP, we actually were walking the talk that we were talking, Mr. Speaker, and now we see that we're actually starting to see results of that lobbying on behalf of our ministers and the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on in this list of meetings and lobbying that our ministers and the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook have done on our behalf and on behalf of farmers in this province, and I think it's a very credible record that they have. And you know, Mr. Speaker, when we see the announcement that the federal government made last week that they were putting in place an OC and then legislation will follow shortly, Mr. Speaker, we have seen results.

You know, Mr. Speaker, as I said before when I spoke about the free doughnuts that the NDP used to go and lap up at all these meetings, and I remember Mr. Lingenfelter, when he was Ag minister, he'd go to these meetings and then he'd stomp out mad. And that was before the meeting was ever over. What kind of a reception did they actually think they were going to get

from the federal government? And that doesn't matter, Mr. Speaker. It was a Liberal federal government part of that time. And they didn't have any more respect for the NDP in their lobbying than they do now when there's a Conservative government in place.

So I don't think it matters who's in place federally, and it certainly will never be the NDP, so they'll never have their cousins in place. But should there be a Liberal government in the future or another Conservative majority government, we don't think that that kind of lobbying works. We feel that the lobbying that was done on our behalf, on behalf of farmers in this province this time has worked very, very well. And I think we owe our ministers and the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook a lot of gratitude for what they've done for our farmers. And I think we saw that yesterday from many of the delegates at SARM who appreciate what has been done by members of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I did a little homework on the NDP record because I found it interesting and almost hypocritical on the members' part opposite where it was the member from Nutana and some of the other members that were being very critical, whether they were there still running the gamut for the Wheat Board, you know, kind of supporting the Friends of the Wheat Board. And let me put this in the record too, Mr. Speaker: the Wheat Board monopoly is gone. It's not coming back. And you know, there's about as much chance of the Wheat Board coming back as the NDP forming government if they don't change their attitude and get a better position on different issues on that side of the House instead of being stuck back in the 1940s and '50s, where we're now into a new millennium where actually it can take some new ideas and a new government to actually promote this.

Mr. Speaker, I looked back at some of the past Ag ministers for the NDP, and I start with 1991. And I think there's members on this side of the House that have probably forgot some of the fine people that the NDP had for Ag ministers and all the great stuff they did for the farmers in this province.

And I go back, Mr. Speaker, and I remember it well. Berny Wiens was the minister of Agriculture in 1991. And you know, what I remember him most about, Mr. Speaker, was they held a rally in Rosetown. It happened to be Mr. Wiens's own riding. And I'd never been to a rally, and I wasn't really that political, but things were really tough. And I believe there was a transportation issue at that time, but there was also an issue with the present government we had in this province that had cut the GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] program. So I got with a few of my farmer friends, and off to Rosetown we went — right across the province, Mr. Speaker, because that was such a big issue that Mr. Wiens had done to farmers when he cancelled the GRIP program. Well, Mr. Speaker, about 3,500 farmers show up.

Man am I glad when I was Ag minister or where we have the Ag minister from Thunder Creek now, we haven't had any such rallies yet. And I don't see any coming in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, it didn't stop there. Then we had Darrel Cunningham. And I can't really remember him that well, so I presume he probably didn't cut as much as Berny Wiens did,

but he didn't actually do anything else either. That's probably why I don't remember him.

Mr. Speaker, Andy Renaud was another one that I can't really find where he did much. Of course he didn't last long. He was about six months. And really I can see that happening when the NDP were in power because of their track record with Ag ministers.

But then, near and dear to my heart, Eric Malcolm Thomas Upshall, and I know this guy very well. He's my brother-in-law. But, Mr. Speaker, I remember in opposition on how many occasions did we have to tell Mr. Upshall to take his crayons out, sign on the dotted line, and help our producers get programs in place. He has never forgiven me for that. So, Mr. Speaker, at Christmas and at Easter and all the times I have the luxury of meeting Mr. Upshall when he comes home — and sometimes he comes for a few days, and sometimes not very long — but we reminisce about the good old times when he was in the legislature.

But, Mr. Speaker, why I'm going on with this list? It's tied to transportation because all these ministers went through periods where transportation was an issue. So this issue didn't just happen today.

Mr. Speaker, the list of Ag ministers for the NDP goes on. Then Dwain Lingenfelter, and I remember him very well for a number of issues because he was one of the guys who would walk out on meetings. He was also the same Ag minister that had a hunger strike right in this building, Mr. Speaker, in this legislature. Farmers were so upset with the NDP and Mr. Lingenfelter that that was really the record that he has.

And then of course I can maybe hurry through this. My time's running out. But Mr. Wartman, and I remember Mr. Wartman well. Because I remember on a number of occasions, where in question period, Mr. Wartman's face would get very red and he would tell us no matter what cuts he made, whether it was rural service centres, what it was, it was just the right thing to do. Putting nursing home fees up, that was another thing, just the right thing to do.

So, Mr. Speaker, my time has run out here away too quick. I had a bunch more things to talk about, but at this point I will move my motion, Mr. Speaker:

That this Assembly supports the Government of Canada in passing an order in council to help address the grain transportation backlog and further supports the swift implementation of emergency legislation to address this issue.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Melville-Saltcoats:

That this Assembly supports the Government of Canada in passing an order in council to help address the grain transportation backlog and further supports the swift implementation of emergency legislation to address this issue.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise in the Assembly today and enter into the debate on, yes, what I did call a ridiculous motion and I will continue to explain why this motion is completely unnecessary and nonsensical in many ways, Mr. Speaker.

In and of itself, we do agree there are desperate measures that are needed to be taken to address the grain transportation backlog, so we agree with that portion of it. And we also agree that there is a need for emergency action on the part of the federal government on the issue. But there is a whole lot behind that, Mr. Speaker, that isn't being addressed in this motion and that's what we're going to speak to in the next little while.

One of the things I do agree with the previous speaker was that this is not a new story. We know that transportation of grain has been an issue in this province and in Western Canada ever since farmers broke the land back in the previous century, and that would include people like my grandfather, Mr. Speaker, who was a farmer who came here in 1909. He got his homestead patent and he started farming.

And the first thing he found out was one of the biggest difficulties in being a successful entrepreneurial farmer was his inability to get good prices for his wheat from the grain companies and the fact that they were being held hostage by the railways in order to move their grain to market. So grain transportation, not a new story, Mr. Speaker, at all, and it's one that has continued to plague Prairie farmers for many, many, many decades.

[11:00]

What you see, Mr. Speaker, and we see it unrolling again, back in the 1920s, farmers were lobbying hard and forming grain companies of their own in order to be able to handle the large monopoly that the railways represented. And we are still dealing with that issue, Mr. Speaker, 100 years later. And I think that's just a tragedy that we cannot sort this out and that for too long, the powerful railway companies have really taken a beating, or given a beating to Prairie grain farmers.

I really don't think the immensity of this catastrophe is even being talked about yet. The impact of this particular backlog is going to be devastating and have a significant catastrophic effect on farmers for many, many months to come, if not years to come, if there's not a way to figure out this problem.

What I'm hearing, Mr. Speaker, from producers is that the biggest, the worst thing that could happen right now is a bumper crop again this year. And for us to hear farmers saying that, it's something I think that people need to sit up and pay attention to and really take seriously. For farmers to be saying that a bumper crop this fall is going to be a bad thing tells you how bad the situation is and what a catastrophe it is. We are hearing producers say that because we see the failure of this government to take the federal government to task. We see a failure on the part of the federal government to take this situation seriously. And it's a tragedy that members opposite do not see the importance of this issue.

What we see . . . And I know the minister questioned their support of Minister Ritz this morning. What we have, their Premier, our Premier, Mr. Speaker, is giving, heaping praise on this current federal Minister of Agriculture for his inaction on the file. We see on February 28th an article of Murray Mandryk in the *Leader-Post*, and here's a quote:

Take Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall, who — notwithstanding his elevated status as Steven Harper's replacement-in-waiting — felt the need to stroke the ego of Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz by uttering the nonsensical observation that he was doing fine work on the grain transportation file.

Yep, you read the above correctly. In a scrum Wednesday, Wall praised Ritz for his work — particularly behind the scenes where we don't see what's . . . going on.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's in direct contrast to what the minister was saying this morning. So I wish the Premier and the minister would figure out which story it is that they want to pass on to the people of Saskatchewan.

But as far as I am concerned, we heard the former speaker give us a long list of the meetings that the committee of . . . the trio of ministers are having. He read off all these dates that he met with certain officials. On that list we did not hear meetings with Minister Ritz. We did not hear about the efforts this government is making to convince where the power is. We know that they can go and meet with a lot of people.

The other thing you didn't hear on that list was meetings with producers. Are these people not talking to producers and listening to what they have to say? They're too busy jetting around the country having meetings with the bigwigs and they're not sitting down and talking to producers and finding out what's really going on on the ground.

If they did, they would hear what we're hearing, Mr. Speaker, and that is, Gerry Ritz is not doing a good job; that Lisa Raitt's proposal on Friday and the emergency order in council really does nothing little than support what the railways were planning to do originally. So there's no need to heap praise. And I keep saying the ides of March are coming, Mr. Speaker, but we are not here to praise Minister Ritz or this government's performance on this file.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, even a year ago in March, when the *Fair Rail Freight Service Act* was being debated in Parliament, there was all kinds of requests coming forward from producers, from shippers, from the federal opposition, saying that that bill simply didn't do the trick. And this government did nothing. This minister, when asked in question period, responded by saying, well we don't think there's a problem.

And, Mr. Speaker, if you want to fast-forward a few months later, when the crop came in we had the best crop these producers have ever produced. We're hoping to see more of them, Mr. Speaker. And that minister said there was no problem with the *Fair Rail Freight Service Act*. We know that there were serious concerns that were presented by a number of shippers and shippers' coalitions as well as the opposition. And all of those amendments that were proposed, sound

amendments that would make the performance agreements meaningful, were completely ignored by this federal government and supported by this government, Mr. Speaker.

And I think that's part of the tragedy here, is that this government didn't realize a year ago what was happening in Ottawa. They didn't realize that the amendment to the *Canadian Transportation Act* under the *Fair Rail Freight Service Act* was simply not going to deal with the issue.

And we've seen the Liberals try and do it when the Justice Estey's report came out in 1998. We've seen the failure of that government to even deal with the railways at that time. We know the railways are a seriously powerful lobby when they can afford to put a two-page ad in *The Globe and Mail* justifying what they call their position. We know that this is a difficult lobby to take on, Mr. Speaker, but we expect our government to support our producers and ensure that they are protected and that their rights are juxtaposed appropriately against the monopoly of the railway system here in Canada.

I am glad that the minister appointed the trio of ministers and along with the Legislative Secretary to do the work they're doing. It's important work. And I think the meetings they are having are important, Mr. Speaker. There's no doubt about that. And I think there's a good trio or quartet, maybe, if you want to call it that, that are doing some good work in the area. But I think the focus is misguided. They are meeting with the people that are part of what we see as the problem. And what they really need to deal with is the minister himself. The cabinet of the Government of Canada are the only people who can change this and fix it.

And unfortunately, as many people will say, the carry-over this year will probably be 23 million tonnes anyways, even with some drastic measures imposed upon the railways. We know that we want to see at least 14,000 cars per week. This government has indicated they're asking for 13,000 cars per week. We'll see what's in the legislation.

But I think, you know, a lot of this is an issue of this government not doing enough early enough and in fact back to last March when they should have been advocating with Minister Ritz and Minister Raitt on proper amendments to the *Fair Rail Freight Service Act* so that farmers wouldn't be facing this situation now. The ball was dropped last year in March, and they're trying desperately to pick it up now.

And what we see is a number of emergency measures, emergency orders in council, emergency legislation, when none of this was necessary, Mr. Speaker, had this government, rather than patting Gerry Ritz on the back, actually talked to him and said, you are heading us for catastrophe. We know these bumper crops are going to be hopefully the new norm. That should be a positive thing for this government. And these new markets that we're opening up and that producers are establishing should be the new norm. But with this kind of performance by the federal government, then we know that farmers are actually in a much worse state.

When we hear farmers saying they're getting less for their wheat now than 40 years ago, Mr. Speaker, what's going on? That is completely impossible.

An Hon. Member: — How many farmers are saying that?

Ms. Sproule: — And regardless of the member on the other side chirping over there, how many farmers are saying that, we know that prices are desperately low. And I don't know how she could deny that. Lots of farmers are saying that they are in desperate straits. And for her to ridicule that and make it sound like it's not an issue shows how completely unaware this government is about the severity and the catastrophic nature of this situation. And if they don't start at least making things louder and speaking out for the producers in this province, Mr. Speaker, it is impossible to see how we're going to move out of this situation, how any bumper crop is going to be properly moved towards port.

And there's a number of other issues, and unfortunately I too am out of time, but I think my colleagues will speak to that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join this very important debate as we go on. And this is one of the most important debates I think that we're facing in this legislature this spring. You know, as we go, farmers have struggled over the years. If you've been a farmer — and many of us have been around here — there's been more I would say poor years than good years. And we're finally having some good years, and now a transportation problem has come.

I'm disappointed on the other side, as I was when we had this debate last week, of how they still don't want to work with us and the federal government to help to move this along. I find that greatly disappointing. And I'll tell you what. I heard that at SARM, that this shouldn't be a political issue. This shouldn't be on ideological. This shouldn't be about the Friends of the Wheat Board.

I know they had a meeting in Raymore trying to revive the Wheat Board and trying to use this as an excuse, and the NDP following along with that. The Wheat Board has nothing to do with the trouble we're in, and if they'd have been here, we'd still be in the transportation problem we're in. It's been a problem that came to forefront because we grew the greatest crop we've ever had in Saskatchewan. But knowing our producers, I think we're going to be growing more as we go along.

This is a problem that we have to work into the future. And the feds are working with it, and our government is working with them. We've been working for the last year, year and a half on this knowing that . . . Even ever since we've been in government, we've also been discussing transportation issues. The pipeline was one of them. Those are things that we know that have to, as you move and your province grows, you have to deal with growth, how to move whether it be oil, whether it be grain, to make things run smooth.

We've been fighting for pipelines. We had the members yesterday vote against a pipeline again, like vote against it. That would help . . . If you actually want to help, help the grain transportation, you have to move some of the oil off the rail

onto there. You would think that they would be in support of that. And maybe they were because there was only, when the vote was said and done, you can look at *Hansard*, only three of them voted for it. Only three of them stayed back in the House to vote for it. I don't know where the other six were. And I hope that they feel that by not voting, they're actually making a statement on that.

But those are the issues that we have to be working together. And I constantly hear the other side just basically attacking any motion we bring forward or bringing . . . trying to work as we work with the federal government. This is a debate that's happening in Ottawa right now. And you know, I don't hear much about the federal NDP on this. I don't even much about the federal Liberals on this.

You know, same thing, that they're kind of, if I believe some of the stuff I've heard coming from both of the opposition parties in Ottawa, it's more about the Wheat Board again, talking about how, well if the Wheat Board were here, we wouldn't have this problem, trying to use that argument to bring that forward. Like my colleague from Saltcoats said, it's done, and the farmers are happy with it. They realize that without the Wheat Board, they are growing. And also that the prices have been good for the number of years that the Wheat Board's been gone. Right now this isn't a price issue; this is a transportation issue. The price is still high at the coast. It's the base that's spreading that the companies are passing back.

But if this problem keeps going on, we're going to be losing customers. One of them is Japan has already raised issues with us. We have a reliable reputation and we cannot afford to lose that in the world market because it is a very competitive market out there throughout the world. They will go to other markets. They would sooner come to us but if we keep having a constant transportation problem, they will start looking at other places.

The price is still not bad on the coast. It's a base issue and that's being caused by the transportation. And that's why we support the federal government and what they're trying to do. And we know that there has to be penalties. And we know that there has to be service agreements. This can't be run like it was before. There has to be where they, between agreements between the grain companies and the rail companies, there has to be a commitment of so much tonnage being moved. They have to have the power, the units to haul them. They have to have the cars. We need them, services agreements.

And our government has been working with that for the last year and a half. I can read the list that the member had went down when we started this again, you know, when we first, the Minister of Highways first met with rail companies. And we've had meetings with them. And I think this is the way to go, the way the federal government is going, that we're going to have to put legislations in, and orders. And there is going to have to be a minimum tonnage hauled. There will have to be service agreements as we move forward with this. That's why we're bringing this motion forward, showing that we support the federal government. And I still express my disappointment that the NDP on the other side wouldn't be wanting to work with this.

And just listening to the member opposite, I believe she's going

to vote against the motion. I hope not. It would be nice to send a unified front as this government keeps talking with the federal government, to keep working with them. And also just to show the producers that this legislature is united in this problem, that the opposition isn't just trying to get some headlines on it. Because this is way, way, way too important as we're moving into seeding.

You know, the grain is still at least — depends who you talk to and where you talk to — but anywhere from two to three months back with contracts being filled as now the weather is . . . This is the first time we've had some nice weather in a long time. But all of a sudden the fields are soft. Like right now, they're actually getting soft. And so now producers are either having to either try to load in the middle of the night when the ground is still frozen or just load early in the morning and not being able to get that extra one or two loads in the afternoon because . . . if you're hauling from grain bags or even your yard in that.

[11:15]

The RMs will be looking at putting bans on. If this weather persists, the bans will be coming on very, very fast, so then that's going to slow it down. So that's why we need to keep supporting the federal government in this and keep . . . And we have been. We've been pushing them, but they are moving forward.

And I am impressed with what the federal government is trying to do because they know that they're going to have to, you know, pass emergency legislation. And we want to send a message as a province that we're behind them, that our ministers, Minister of Agriculture, that all our ministers are behind them in whatever the federal government has to do to get the grain moving and to keep the grain moving through the summer because we're going to grow another great crop this year.

I know the farmers. I know the member opposite said, well farmers . . . I don't know what farmer told her that he says, oh, he doesn't want a bumper crop. Because I don't know which . . . I've never met one yet that says he wouldn't like to have a bumper crop. What they're worried about is the long-range plan to move that.

And when I was at SARM yesterday talking to a lot of farmers, I mean yes, it is an issue. That's the first thing you talk about. You used to talk about weather when you went out, you know, in the coffee shop or at SARM, the opening conversation. Now it was about grain transportation. I must have had 50 conversations yesterday at SARM about it. It's on everybody's mind. But they understand that we're trying to work with the . . . We're working with the federal government. And it's going to be an issue, and this . . . [inaudible] . . . most important issue that we're dealing with. And they understand that.

I got lots of good comments just saying, just keep on them. Keep on the railroads. Keep on the grain companies. We need these agreements. We need these penalties if they're not going to move this.

But we need to know each month how much grain we're going

to be able to move because that allows a producer to know how he can contract. Because there's nothing worse than going to the elevator, and the price is good, and the company telling you that well, we can't . . . we're not contracting right now. Right now they're not contracting peas. There's nothing worse to the producer. You go in there, and being said, well you know, we'd like to buy them, but we can't move them for three months, so we're not offering you a contract. And as we go into seeding, you know, there's going to be some cash crunches going on out there. And we need to have this money moving back to the farmers, and we need this grain to be moved.

But I was very impressed with the comments that I got at SARM for this government and the ministers and the Premier saying that we're making this a priority, that we need to make this a long-range plan to move grain. And I didn't hear much praise being said about the opposition because they've told me, I've told them more than once — even from one or two, if I would say, maybe the few supporters they've got in my constituency — they shouldn't be making this a political issue about the Wheat Board or anything. They should be just behind you in any way we can help together to get this grain moving. So that's why, Mr. Speaker, I support this motion brought forward by the member for Saltcoats wholeheartedly. Thank you.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter this debate on a critical issue for our province at this point in time. We wish we would have been able to enter into debate on this weeks or months ago. And I wish we would have seen some action from this government in years past, months ago in preparation for the challenge that we're facing right now.

Maybe I'll just touch on one issue here that's rather interesting and I think pretty telling. This issue was so important to members opposite and the federal Conservatives that when producers held a meeting just this past Sunday in Raymore, Saskatchewan, a day-long meeting in fact — you might be surprised, Mr. Speaker, because this apparently is an important issue to the member that was just speaking or to the member from Last Mountain or to the Premier or to the Agriculture minister — but do you know how many of them showed up? Because there's 48 members, Mr. Speaker, many from rural Saskatchewan, many that represent farm families and farm businesses across this province. Do you know how many showed up, Mr. Speaker, to that meeting in Raymore? Not a one. Not the member from Weyburn, not the member from Arm River-Watrous, not the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood, not the Agriculture minister, not the Premier.

They didn't care enough to show up to a meeting to listen to producers that came out because of the grain transportation crisis. Now this is pretty telling, and it's consistent with the actions and behaviour of this government on this grain transportation crisis, because they've been non-existent from the get-go in bringing forward real solutions that address the grain transportation crisis. It's also noteworthy that their kissing cousins, the federal Conservatives, Mr. Speaker, were also not at the meeting.

So it's awfully strange for other federal parties to be represented, for our federal party, the NDP to be there, for the Agriculture critic from Nutana to be there at the meeting. I attended the meeting all day there. Many of the . . . Many, many municipal leaders were at that meeting that are now at SARM here this week, were also at that meeting, many producers from across the province.

And this simply represents what we've seen from this government all the way through. What we've seen from that government, what we saw with the announcement from the federal government is simply too little too late, and it's far too weak. The circumstance that we're dealing with right now was entirely foreseeable, and that's the sad reality.

When that government, along with the federal government, intervened to dismantle the Wheat Board without a vote of producers, there was one voice or a voice that should have been listened to. Setting aside the marketing debate — because at the end of the day that marketing decision should have been up to producers, not this Premier, not the Prime Minister, not me; it should have been up to producers — but the one thing I heard from producers across this province, setting aside the marketing decision, was that what was being dismantled as well was a transportation logistics system and clout with rail companies. And it was heard from folks on either side of that debate that this government and the federal government better be doing something to ensure that a logistics system for transportation would be in place and some clout would be there for producers. Those guys dismantled that system and replaced it with nothing, Mr. Speaker.

Fast forward. That's a couple years ago. Last year when there was opportunities to make improvements to the fair freight rail amendment Act federally, that government failed to provide any support for amendments that would have actually been meaningful for producers. And the federal government actually voted against amendments that were put forward that would have ensured service level agreements — the one we now hear late coming from the Premier — service level agreements that would have been actually enforceable from a legal perspective and would have allowed producers to actually receive some compensation directly back to them. So as I say, this is an entirely foreseeable challenge and crisis that we've come around to, with no actions from that Premier, no actions from the federal government to address the challenges that are in place.

Not to mention that it was an exciting summer last year. I recall we started out with a really wet spring. And sort of in through August, we were celebrating Roughrider victories, which we all were, and we were touting this record crop that was coming, being produced. So producers clearly did their work last summer. They did everything they needed to do to produce a record crop — something that government was willing to celebrate, that we were all proud of — but that government again not recognizing that they had a responsibility and that they failed to act to ensure that the grain transportation system was there to make sure that producers could get that record crop to port, get that record crop to market to make sure that they could get paid.

Now the reality is that producers have not been paid in many

cases all across this province. They have grain sitting in bins that they're wondering when it's ever going to be able to be moved, whether they're ever going to be able to get paid for it. They have grain bags all across Saskatchewan that are right now having all sorts of damage that are being caused to them, and also a big question of how to prepare for the next growing season. We have piles of grain across this province that in fact are rotting with producers not getting paid for that record crop and their hard work. Of course all of this is highly unfortunate.

We know as well that this . . . It wasn't a secret that the big rail companies have been making massive cuts over the past couple of years. In fact in 2012, CP engaged in one of . . . Of course the two big rail companies, one of those companies, CP, actually cut 4,500 workers, 11,000 railcars, and over 400 locomotives. And that wasn't enough of a wake-up call for that Premier to realize, or the federal government, that they were going to have a challenge on their hands when it came to capacity.

Now we've been calling for actions on this for a long time, Mr. Speaker. We were out listening to producers that were saying that, as the transportation network and system that was in place was being dismantled, that something needed to be put in place. That government failed to listen and rejected that call from producers.

As we've got into the winter of this year, with this record crop going to waste in many cases, with producers with bills and loans due, with that record crop rotting in many circumstances, and with commodity prices collapsing, Mr. Speaker, because of the inaction of this government, the federal government, and the poor performance of the rail companies, producers are now getting a terrible price for their product.

And I know just a couple of weeks ago, wheat was selling for 4.80 here or producers were receiving 4.80 here on the prairies, and at port they were receiving well over \$10 for that crop basis that had grown to a massive amount. So the matter of fact is that out of this crisis many shippers, many transporters have been making big dollars out of this, but our producers have taken a big hit, a \$5 billion hit, without any compensation.

We've been calling for — as I say in January it was dismissed by that Agriculture minister and that Premier who were late to the scene — calling for performance standards to be established that could be legislated and to ensure that reparations and compensation would go directly back to producers who are taking the hit. Mr. Speaker, that Agriculture minister brushed that off, said that the rail companies would sort it out, treated the big rail companies with kid gloves when he needed to utilize a little bit of muscle on behalf of Saskatchewan producers.

They also rejected our call for open access to be considered or joint running rights to get just a bit of competition on this rail system that right now is a duopoly monopoly, no market at all, and make sure that our shortline rail companies and other companies can be part of the solution.

We called for immediate opening up of the CTA [*Canada Transportation Act*] to make sure that actions could be taken then to address the crisis that was unfolding and a reality for Saskatchewan producers. But this government was certainly

dismissive of the concerns of producers and not aware of the realities that were going on, or they simply didn't care, Mr. Speaker.

The announcement that we saw just a week and a bit ago and the fawning over the announcement from the Agriculture minister and the Premier was weak. It was weak by a provincial government that should recognize that \$5 billion in farm incomes is something that's big, that recognizes that our producers who have done the hard work deserve to get paid. It was weak for not addressing the real numbers needed for rail cars to get that grain to market.

We believe that the penalties that were put forward along . . . what we're hearing from producers, the penalty that could be up to \$100,000. Sounds like a big number for some, Mr. Speaker, but that's walking-around money for the railroads. That's walking-around money for Hunter Harrison, Mr. Speaker. And those dollars, Mr. Speaker, don't flow back to producers. They're going to be collected by government. That's wrong, Mr. Speaker, and doesn't address the issue.

We have a crisis on our hands. We need immediate actions to address the crisis. We need short-term actions to do just that, and we need structural change that's going to serve the long-term interests, not just for producers but for the Saskatchewan economy. And it's past time that that government stopped tripping over itself to fawn over the federal government, that they start standing up for producers, that they stop treating the rail companies with kid gloves and that they start pushing some real solutions that are going to work for producers across this province like mandating some fleet size and rolling stock, like mandating the locomotives that have been cut across this province and ensuring, as I say, that producers are the ones that receive the dollars back because, Mr. Speaker, they're the ones that have taken the hit. And they're the ones, Mr. Speaker, that are bearing the consequences.

So we will continue to support, call for strong leadership, real actions, legislation that makes a difference, not scrapping things like revenue caps that provide a bit of protection for producers but real solutions for the Saskatchewan economy and producers in this province.

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it gives me great pleasure to wade into this debate on the motion put forward by my good friend and the member from Salcoats commending the federal government for taking action on this.

This is something, Mr. Speaker, that is going to really help out our producers here in Western Canada, and we desperately need that help. And there is one thing that, you know, we do do. On this side of the government, when we go to Ottawa, we don't go down there in an adversarial position. We're not like the former premier when Premier Calvert walked out on the Prime Minister. Mr. Speaker, this government believes in working together in conjunction with the federal government.

Now I guess I can kind of see why maybe, maybe that side

would be against it because they're probably playing up to their federal cousins. Because they don't want, and I don't think they want to see this go forward. I don't think they want to see the producers make money over here. Like I mean, definitely yesterday, they voted against the Gateway pipeline. Like this is good for Western Canada. It's good for all of Canada.

[11:30]

They don't want to see us move forward. They want to be stuck in in the past like they always have been. They want to stick with their federal cousins who seems to think that anything that works good in Western Canada has to be bad for the rest of Canada. You know, going so far as calling it the Dutch disease. Mr. Speaker, we want to work with the federal government to make things good, not just for our producers but make it good for all of Canada, Mr. Speaker. And I think that not being adversarial is probably the way to go.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member from Nutana who said we are not meeting with the producers. Excuse me. Let's just take a look at all the people that come from a rural background on that side of the House. And let's take a look at the people that come from a rural background on this side of the House, of which many of us are producers. You know, Mr. Speaker, it's almost a little bit of a joke when the member from Rosemont sits there and says about none of us going to the meeting in Raymore. Mr. Speaker, that meeting was a meeting with the Friends of the Wheat Board. And there is no Wheat Board anymore, Mr. Speaker. There is no Wheat Board. Give up on that end of it, and thankfully it's gone.

And I'll give you a little story about the Wheat Board. If you figure the Wheat Board was so good, I'm old enough to remember when oats were under the Wheat Board. And you want to know something? We never made any money on oats until the Wheat Board gave it up. Mr. Speaker, I also remember when — well it was called rapeseed at that time — used to be under the Wheat Board. Of course up in my area, northeastern Saskatchewan, we grow a lot of rape, canola. And you know something? That used to be controlled by the Wheat Board and we couldn't deliver it.

Mr. Speaker, I am so happy that the Wheat Board is finally gone. But, Mr. Speaker, for them to sit there and call this motion ridiculous is absolutely, it's ridiculous. Because, Mr. Speaker, the member from Nutana called it ridiculous. That is a great motion. And we believe we should give accolades where they are deserved and for working with the federal government to move this forward, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's another little thing that was brought forward. And it was brought forward by our Premier, Mr. Speaker, where he said we should maybe be moving some grain south also. And I think that we can work on this aspect of it also.

A very good example in Arborfield, Linear Grain which is on a shortline — I'm very fortunate; I have two shortlines within the Carrot River Valley constituency — and Linear Grain has been trying to move oats south and couldn't move it south because of some of the problems with the railways. They had contracts signed, and they're just a small company, and they said they

actually lost up to a million dollars because they could not move that grain south. So our Premier definitely was right when he said we should be looking at north-south movement of grain also.

But Mr. Speaker, I think that some of the things that we have done and partnered with, with the federal government . . . You know, one of the things that we need are the mandatory service levels and reciprocal penalties for grain shippers and railways if they don't fulfill their commitments. And that's a very good, a very good thing because, let's face it, as one of the people said one time, that the grain companies aren't exactly wearing a white hat in this either. They have to work along with this also.

We do want to see, we do want to see it raised to 13,000 cars per week instead of 11,000. And I think we can work with the government on these things because we don't go in there just saying, you're doing everything wrong. That's it, we're leaving. No sir. We work with the federal government and that's why, like I said, this motion actually gives accolades where it should be.

Mr. Speaker, you know, the NDP sits back and talks about the various different things that they were doing for rural Saskatchewan. I got news for you, the NDP forgot about rural Saskatchewan a long time ago in what they call Roy's revenge. Because he did not, he did not want to see rural Saskatchewan move forward.

This government, this government has helped out in the rail transportation in rural Saskatchewan. Because of our help with the shortline railways, of which I have said I have two of them in our constituency alone, you know, we can have these shortline railways and it saves money on our, you know, degradation of our highways. And the minister, Ministry of Highways for a number of years has been putting in money into our shortline railways and helping our shortline railways move the product. Now the whole catch is they still have to move it out to a CN or a CP line. And that's where a good part of the bottleneck has been.

But Mr. Speaker, in 2008 the shortline railway sustainable program was created to address the recapitalization challenges faced by existing shortlines. Funding for the program was provided by the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation, and it was actually increased to \$900,000, Mr. Speaker, to help these shortline railways move this product.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Highways still continues to work very closely with the 13 existing shortline railways, and we're hoping to see more come along in the near future. This government, this government will stand behind our shortline railways, and we will stand behind our farmers all the way to the bank.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is far different, far different than what the NDP ever did for rural Saskatchewan. Oh like I mean, they've always been against rural Saskatchewan, let's face it. You know, they went back . . . You can go right back. There's all sorts of things in that . . . You know, when they closed down all the agriculture offices. And they said, oh we're for the farmers, but we're going to go and close down 31 agricultural offices. Yes, that was a great help, wasn't it, Mr. Speaker?

You know, they eliminated the GRIP, ended up in court. They ended up winning, but they eliminated the GRIP, a signed contract. And they just said, oh, no, we don't believe in doing that. Even though it's a signed contract, they ripped it up. Yes, just a great job from the NDP protecting our farmers. And they sit there and now claim, oh you know, we're not doing the job to protect our farmers.

We have had meetings. And I just don't have enough time to talk about all the meetings that we have had all the way through when we saw this crisis coming. We've had meetings and we want to, like I said, work with the federal government to move this forward to alleviate this traffic jam that we have on the railways.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess since I'm basically out of time, I'm going to say, I certainly support this motion that was put forward by my good seatmate here. And I hope, I hope that that side will vote along with this motion also because it shows we're supporting our farmers. Thank you.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this particular motion. I think this fall will be the 111th crop that our family members will have taken off of the farm where my mother grew up. My father's family in the farm there, they were a few years later, so I think it's probably going to be the 103rd or 104th crop that was taken.

So, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that's been quite interesting in listening to this debate, and I have a great deal of respect for my fellow Viking legislator over there, the former minister of Agriculture, because I know that he also has these broad roots, broad base across the province. And what I think all of us are hearing in this province this year is that how could this happen? How could this happen that we have the best crop by a huge margin that we've ever had and then all of a sudden we can't get this crop to the market?

And, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about grain. We're talking about grain being transported. But more importantly we're talking about food. This is food for the world. We end up . . . Part of the rationale for many of our ancestors settling in this part of the world was that we were going to help feed the world. And, Mr. Speaker, when there are technical problems or issues that arise that make it very difficult for that food to go to the world market, then I think there's, you know, a fundamental question about the farmers getting paid for it, but more importantly there's a fundamental question about our responsibility, our role as legislators in Saskatchewan, and I would say our friends in Parliament in Ottawa, about making sure that that food is available for the world.

And, Mr. Speaker, this motion today has some positive aspects to it in the sense that it's addressing the fact that the federal government is taking some steps now, a little bit late, about the order in council they've put forward. We all agree that the teeth in that order in council are somewhat softened or somewhat not the way they should be. And we also think that going ahead with emergency legislation makes sense.

But, Mr. Speaker, in the motion today we don't have the suggestions that come from the Government of Saskatchewan about what should be in the emergency legislation. And that would be a much better debate in this House if we could all talk about, well what are the things that make sense to put in federal legislation that are going to deal with our transportation situation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, part of the promise or the plan put forward by the Government of Canada when the Prairies were settled was a way to have a subsidized rate of transportation to get products to the market because everybody knew that we were a long ways away from people who needed food. And that was originally the Crow rate based on a whole number of issues in the late 19th century. And it stood there for many, many years, but it also ended up having a number of challenges as it related to how the railway companies were operated. But, Mr. Speaker, that whole concept of how do we make sure that there's a fair way of transporting the goods from Saskatchewan to the markets of the world has been a situation where we need to work and deal with how this works.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when the transportation modes that we have in Canada have come down to basically two major corporations on the transportation side on rail, we also know that our grain transportation has been bought by an international company that specializes in bulk transport of goods. And so, Mr. Speaker, the whole issue of how grain then competes with all of the other items that are transported by grain companies becomes also an issue for us. And so one of the tasks of the Saskatchewan government, and I know it was one of our tasks when I was on the government side, was to try to figure out what control, what kind of mechanisms that we can put into place to protect Saskatchewan people from international markets, and also then make sure that we can work in that market in a way that has the best methods of getting our products to the world.

Now clearly we're a trading province. We're a trading country, and we sell bulk products. One of the bulk products is grain. And unfortunately, we're in a situation where others are able to take advantage of our good product and sell it on the world market, and take a big chunk of the profit from that grain. And that's what this issue is about.

It's about farmers saying, well I know if I could get my product over to Vancouver, or if I could get it to Montreal or to Portland, that I could get this kind of a price for it. But I don't have control or access on some of that. And all we're talking about with this motion, which is part of what I think the member from Saltcoats is talking about, is that we want to have fair rules that treat our farmers properly.

[11:45]

And so I agree with his sentiment in bringing forth this kind of thing. But the question is, how do we get to those fair rules? And, Mr. Speaker, perhaps we will end up having something come forward from the Minister of Agriculture or the Premier which will set out the kinds of things that we, as Saskatchewan farmers, as Saskatchewan people, as Saskatchewan legislators, want to see in the federal emergency legislation because we all know that these national railways are beyond the legislative competence of this body. And that's another factor that

becomes even more difficult.

Now some of the members over there don't recognize this joint effort, or this joint responsibility, that all members of this House have in dealing with these kinds of issues which are of national and international importance. And, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the former minister of Agriculture that maybe he would sit down with our present minister of Agriculture and the Premier and say, let's figure out what we think should be in the federal legislation. And we would be happy on this side of the House to talk to them about that and make some suggestions about that. But I think it's important that we have a clear message for the national government about how these changes should be made.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's about being fair to our producers here. It's about being fair to our province. Because if we can't sell our product, we can't get revenues that then allow us to fund our health system, our education system, or our road system. And it's also about being fair to businesses that are involved in the transportation area or the grain handling or the world marketing of products from this place.

And, Mr. Speaker, these kinds of questions aren't in this motion. We're not sure where they are. We think that there should be much more public discussion about that. And I encourage the former minister of Agriculture to make that point in his caucus to the Premier and to the Minister of Agriculture so that we can have a common Saskatchewan position that will protect all of our producers. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The 65 minutes for debate has expired. Questions? I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, certainly we're hearing from producers and farm groups, the Western Canadian Wheat Growers and others, that the actions of government have been far too little, far too late, that they're simply too weak.

There's been important meetings across the province that we've been attending, that producers have been holding. I know the Ag critic was out to Assiniboia this last weekend as this crisis is impacting producers right now. There was a meeting in Raymore. I was there along with the Ag critic and federal members as well of the NDP. Who wasn't there, who was notably absent, is every single one of the members on that side of the Assembly, including the MLA for the area and those within the direct area and certainly the Agriculture minister. Not a single federal Conservative either.

My question to the member from Carrot River: how did he or none of his colleagues have the decency to show up and deal directly with producers and RM leaders who are being impacted by the grain transportation crisis?

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that meeting was a Friends of the Wheat Board meeting. The Wheat Board is gone. We never got an invite to it, Mr. Speaker. The Wheat Board is gone. I know that that government, or when

they were government, they want to live in the old days. They want to go back to the '40s. This is a government that believes in growth and moving forward, Mr. Speaker. And we believe that we can operate better when we can make individual choices of how to sell our grain without running it through a monopoly of the Wheat Board. Thank you.

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

Mr. Tochor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The grain crisis experienced by producers across the province has been top priority for this government. We have taken action and worked with our stakeholders on this file, Mr. Speaker. We've encouraged grain companies and railways to negotiate level of service agreements. Both agreed to consider reciprocal penalties, and we asked the federal government to oversee the negotiations.

To the member from Saskatoon Nutana: will your caucus support us in asking the federal government to include mandatory service level agreements and reciprocal penalties for grain shippers and railways?

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

Ms. Sproule: — I find it hard to believe that the member would ask a question like that. We have been calling since last March for changes to the *Fair Rail Freight Service Act*, and this minister and this government looked like a deer in the headlights when asked questions about it. It's very clear that if those changes were made then, the same changes that they're calling for now, if they were made last March, this entire catastrophe could have been avoided. But instead, Mr. Speaker, they sat on their thumbs. They looked confused and dazed when we asked the question. They were twiddling their thumbs and they did absolutely nothing when that bill was introduced in the House of Commons. And at second reading, when proper amendments were put forward by the federal NDP and by grain shippers, this government and the federal government did absolutely nothing to deal with it. It's a ridiculous question.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the former minister of Agriculture, the member from Saltcoats. Will that member sit down with the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier and develop a plan and a proposal for the kinds of conditions and clauses that Saskatchewan wants in the federal legislation? And then will he share that with us on this side of the House so that we can be supportive of that?

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank the member for the question. You know, Mr. Speaker, earlier on today the member from Nutana called my motion ridiculous. I've had my speeches in this legislature called a lot of things but I think that's the first time ridiculous. I take that as somewhat of a compliment.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to offend the members opposite when we ask anything of them to support the federal government. We're not asking for her to have a group hug with the federal Minister of Agriculture, although there's something about that picture I would like to see.

Mr. Speaker, also for the member of Lakeview, one of the things that we won't be doing to support things like this, as he was going to do when he talked about the film tax credit, was take money out of agriculture and take money out of municipalities. That won't be happening under our watch, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see the NDP engaged in an issue affecting rural Saskatchewan. If only if it was a more common occurrence. Mr. Speaker, when the members opposite were in government we saw thousands of miles of rail track abandoned in Saskatchewan and the NDP did absolutely nothing. In fact, they were so busy cutting and slashing provincial programs and services for producers and off-loading costs onto RMs, they probably didn't have time to even notice. To the member from Nutana: when your party was in government, why did you completely ignore farmers and do nothing when the railways abandoned thousands of miles of branch lines?

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to answer this question because it seems to me it was the member's federal cousins who were the ones that were busy doing the dismantling and nothing was done by the Conservatives to stop that process, followed by the Liberals in the '90s. So this was a federal issue that actually would devastate much of what happened.

My question though is, why are these backbenchers presenting prepared questions now at this point in time when a year ago, when they should have been active and should have been doing stuff with the federal government and actively promoting the issues of producers here in Saskatchewan, they sat on their thumbs and twiddled their fingers? I'm not sure how they did it both at the same time, Mr. Speaker, but I tell you that there was no action on the part of this government to help farmers at the critical point last year when it should have happened. And now it's too late.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the member from Saltcoats because I know, I know that the member from Saltcoats does like to turn a nice phrase on a number of issues, but the very specific question that's being dealt with in this debate is a serious matter. It's a serious matter about food being produced by our farmers that is supposed to go to the world. And we want to hear from that member, from the Minister of Agriculture, and from the Premier what it is that they're going to set forward on behalf of our producers as it

relates to the federal legislation. So the member from Saltcoats, please answer that question and don't dance around all those other things.

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know this is more fun than I've had for a long time. I'm not sure what got under the skin of the member for Lakeview. Now was it my comments about him finding funding for the film tax credit from ag and municipal, or is it us asking them just to support the federal government in making the railroads improve their quality of hauling grain for the province of Saskatchewan?

Mr. Speaker, we don't have a track record of this side of the aisle as they do for the last 16 years and, you know, that's probably why we have 49 seats on this side, or 48 and Speaker, and they have nine on that side, and none of them, Mr. Speaker, none of them are from rural Saskatchewan.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Ms. Jurgens: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, yesterday we heard how the members opposite oppose the idea of the Northern Gateway pipeline.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 2013 was a record year for exports. Saskatchewan is now Canada's largest exporter per capita. One of the reasons we have experienced such a backlog in rail transportation is due to the transportation of oil rather than grain. Mr. Deputy Speaker, upwards of 20 per cent of our oil now leaves the province on rail. Pipelines such as the Northern Gateway would help to ease the strain experienced by the rail industry. To the member from Saskatoon Nutana: if your members are genuine in their new-found love of agriculture, why did your party choose ideology over a common sense solution like the Northern Gateway pipeline which can be seen as a measure to free up rail transportation for our farmers?

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thanks very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I find it really cute that the backbenchers get a chance to get up with their cute little prepared speeches and kind of trot out some trite old rhetoric that doesn't make any sense at all. What we are talking about here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is what the Premier is saying.

We have Murray Mandryk on February 28th asking this question, and this is directly contrary to what the Minister of Agriculture said today. He said:

So why would Wall — who clearly had a choice of following mom's advice by saying nothing at all when he should have really had nothing nice to say about Ritz — then go out of his way to praise Ritz's inadequate work on the grain transportation file?

That's the question that's at stake here, Mr. Speaker, in this debate today. We can pass all the motions we want, but until we

see real action on the part of this government to criticize that federal minister, when we want to see the Minister of Agriculture go head-to-head with him and tell him what producers really need, what producers are asking for, and what producers need to get out of the crisis, that's when we are going to see a solution to this issue.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Why won't that government ensure that penalties go back to producers who have taken the hit?

The Deputy Speaker: — The time for the 75-minute debate has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 606 — *The Residents-in-care Bill of Rights Act, 2014*

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter the discussion, or actually I will be moving *The Residents-in-care Bill of Rights Act*, Bill No. 606, at the end of my speech. And it really is my pleasure to have this opportunity. This is my first private member's bill, and it's also a private member's bill that the government should take on. This is critically important to people here in Saskatchewan.

And I want to tell you a little bit about why this bill is important to me and the lens through which I see it. My parents, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are both 81. My dad celebrated his birthday last weekend. But they are still in their own home, in the home in which I grew up, two blocks from my house right now, and going strong. And I am knocking on wood here. But they continue to have a huge garden. Actually my dad continues to take over the boulevard and even more garden than they used to have. They still have a big greenhouse. I'm far from offering care for them. They, in fact, are huge care providers for me. Grandpa Rusty walks down the street every week or every day to pick up Ophelia from school. And my mom is always . . . I always go home with a care package — muffins, soups, all kinds of things. So my parents are still, at 81, going strong and continue to be huge care providers for me.

[12:00]

So we're blessed that they're still very healthy. And I'm also lucky that I come from a very big family. I'm the youngest of seven children, and five of us are all still in Saskatoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So when the time comes, when my parents might some day need some support to stay in their home, we're all nearby and have got a great family and we're willing to pull together.

But when we talk about long-term care and personal care, it's through the lens of my parents that I see it. I see them talk about some of their friends. And I know that the care, that if my parents were ever to move into long-term or a personal care

home, the care that I would want for them is care that includes dignity, respect, safety, all those kind of things, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And those are things that I don't just want for my own parents. Those are things that I want for all seniors and all people living in long-term and personal care in Saskatchewan.

Dignity, respect, and safety, and this is what Bill No. 606, *The Residents-in-care Bill of Rights Act* is all about. This is about my parents. This is about their friends. This is about people who live in Saskatoon Riversdale who I meet on a regular basis. This is about people in Saskatchewan having a high quality of life as they age, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The reality is, we've heard many concerns over the last year about the quality of care, and quality of seniors' care in our province, especially how seniors' care is actually getting worse under this government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's not me saying that. That's been many people who have come before the legislature, or come to the legislature to express their concerns. I'm thinking last year actually close to this time last year, there's a story from May 2nd, 2013 when Lynne Seabourne brought her concerns forward. And I'd like to quote from a *Leader-Post* article of again, May 2nd, 2013. Lynne Seabourne is talking about her husband who's living in Extencicare Sunset Nursing Home in south Regina. And she had this to say:

For many years, it was a warm welcoming home, and the situation has deteriorated there to the point to where I felt I had to take a stand for all the residents and the caregivers and nurses who are so important to us.

And she went on to say, and this is her being paraphrased, that things have become progressively worse over the past three years. She says that she's noticed a significant rise in the stress level among care aids. She says that that is a very real concern.

And Lynne isn't the only one who's talked about how care in this province has deteriorated in seniors' residences over recent years, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's mostly . . . We've had residents. We've had families. We continue to have front-line workers. All point to a lack of staffing, short-staffing as being the root cause of this problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The reality is our parents, our grandparents are being left to go to the bathroom in their pants on occasions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people who don't wear incontinent products. These are people who could . . . If they could get to the bathroom by themselves, they would. But they can't because they need assistance, and there isn't always staff to get them there. Caregivers don't have time to help them to the bathroom. They're not being given the time to eat meals. They're not being given the time to eat meals, or help with eating those meals. And in many cases they're not even getting a bath per week, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I had a letter last week from a woman whose mother is in long-term care and shared her experience around her mother who has to wear incontinent products and has diabetes and some other risk factors. And cleanliness is really very important because of some — it is always — but under some of these conditions it becomes even more important. And her mother just a few weeks ago was told that they were short-staffed. She had to miss her weekly bath, so the bath was being bumped to

the next week.

I know again, thinking about this through the lens of my own mother, my mother is a daily bather. She doesn't bath just for cleanliness. She had seven kids. Bathing was her one refuge to escape from I think the seven of us for a few brief minutes to relax, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's a big part of what my mother enjoys doing. She takes a book and disappears for a few minutes. And so I recognize that perhaps daily baths are not possible in long-term and personal care homes, but not even getting a bath a week is just not acceptable. And I think about my mother, who if she was in a place where she wasn't getting a weekly bath, that would have a huge impact on her quality of life.

Despite so many problems in seniors' care, this government continues to refuse to listen to residents, their families, and front-line staff. You can't fix a problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker, unless you recognize there is a problem and try to understand what that problem is.

So about this time last year when the opposition started raising serious concerns we were hearing in seniors' care, initially the government and the minister said, oh there's nothing to see here, no crisis in seniors' care here. And as the stories continued to emerge, the minister agreed to a CEO [chief executive officer] tour, which doesn't solve the problem. It simply reaffirms that in fact there were many, many problems in seniors' care, Mr. Speaker. So the minister finally agrees to do this CEO tour which verifies exactly what we'd been saying all along. But the reality is, what people are saying is the problem, again, residents, families, and front-line staff continue to assert that it is a staffing issue, a lack of staffing. And the government had come up with an urgent action fund which did not address those key concerns, Mr. Speaker, and that has to stop. In order to be able to fix a problem, address a problem, you have to recognize there is a problem, and see what that problem is, Mr. Speaker.

This government has scrapped the minimum care standards in the special care home regulations a few years back, 2011 I believe. They used to require a minimum of two hours per day of nursing and personal care for residents. But this government quietly got rid of that minimum care standard. I can tell you they weren't issuing a news release about cutting of those standards, Mr. Speaker, that they do so often with things that they do. There was no fanfare around cutting of minimum care standards.

Instead of cutting those minimum care standards, the government should have strengthened and improved that standard. But instead this government chose to scrap it. The government's excuse for doing away with minimum quality of care standards is that it didn't want to limit the care that is provided to seniors. But that doesn't make any sense, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Minimum care standards act as a floor, the bare minimum. That's the bottom. A minimum wage, when we think about a minimum wage, that doesn't serve as a maximum wage. Of course we want people to make more than the minimum wage. That would be a good thing.

The government's other excuse for doing away with minimum quality of care standards is that it wanted to deliver more

personalized care instead. And nobody can argue with personalized care, Mr. Speaker. But that doesn't make any sense either. There should be personalized care for everyone, but in no way does having personalized care preclude the need for basic guarantees. Being offered a meal in a timely fashion, being supported to eat that meal, being taken to the washroom when you need to use the washroom, Mr. Speaker, those are not extras. Mr. Deputy Speaker, those should be assumed that for those people we love who are in long-term or personal care; those should be things that people get on a regular daily basis. A regular bath, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the government again, using bizarre logic, got rid of the minimum care standards. And what that means is across this province we have seniors' care that is incredibly uneven and inadequate. There are disparities in the level of care all across the province. So the reality is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know we here in the opposition believe it shouldn't matter where you live, what community you call home, that you still deserve good quality care, and it shouldn't be limited by your home, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is not fair.

We just saw last week in the 250 pages of urgent requests submitted by the health regions that the level of care is very different depending on where you live. The urgent request document shows if you're a senior in the Heartland Health Region you get about three hours less care per week than if you're a senior in the Qu'Appelle Health Region. So again, is it fair that a senior in the Heartland Health Region gets less care than a senior in Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region? I'd ask the minister if he thinks that that is fair, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that I certainly don't and I know that my parents wouldn't think that that's fair. And I know many others who wouldn't think that that is fair either.

It is not acceptable for the standard of seniors' care to be so incredibly uneven and so inadequate. And again that's what we're talking about, is inadequacy of care, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And not that we don't have staff who do the best that they possibly can. I continue to hear from residents and families high praise for staff who are doing the best they can but are stretched incredibly thin, beyond capacity, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So it's not a matter of staff not doing the very best that they can in providing the best care that they can give. But it's a matter of them not having the time to be able to provide it because there aren't enough of them, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'd like to talk a little bit about one of the stories that emerged last year. There were many, many stories, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but Carrie Klassen, I think to her credit . . . It's not always easy coming forward with stories of your experience or things that you're seeing, and Carrie Klassen I think has been hugely instrumental in helping put a face on what's going wrong with seniors' care here in Saskatchewan.

So when we talk about the lack of quality care, again it's not about staffing and their . . . It's not about the staff not delivering. It's about their inability to deliver because there aren't enough of them. Carrie Klassen last year, early April last year, Carrie Klassen, whose own mother has been in care at Sunset care home, but she spends a great deal of time with her mother, about five to six hours a day, Carrie actually left her job to be able to help support her mother because of the things that she saw in long-term care. She felt she needed to be there for her mother. Carrie has said that she's experienced woefully

inadequate . . . She's not experienced. She's watched woefully inadequate care leading to "chaotic situations where one staff member is left to look after as many as 19 residents at a time." I don't know about you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you think about wanting, you become a special care aid or an LPN [licensed practical nurse] or a registered nurse or anybody in a caring profession. You want to do the very best that you can. And I can't even imagine what that's like to be so taxed that there is one of you and 19 people to whom you have to deliver the very best services possible, and you know . . . on a daily basis, you know you're letting people down.

Carrie Klassen pointed out that the core-level staffing at 100 per cent staff, not even when people were sick, but 100 per cent staffing level, they were still short-staffed. That was still not enough staff, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And Carrie had talked about occasions where there can be one care aid . . . Actually I'd like to read the quote. So Carrie Klassen, on NewsTalk 980 on April 9th, 2013, had this to say. She said:

It's heartbreaking. There can be one care aid and she's helping someone on the toilet and then there are bells going off and nobody's there to get them and they're like, where is everybody? We need help.

That is not quality care for our seniors, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people who deserve better than they are getting. So that's one of the reasons why the NDP chose to introduce this legislation, Bill No. 606, *The Residents-in-care Bill of Rights Act*.

And this will require, this will establish a residents-in-care bill of rights, as the name says, and requires the government to regulate province-wide minimum care standards, minimum care standards across the province so there are no disparities whether you're in the Heartland Health Region or the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

A legislated bill of rights is a step that the government's own law reform commission, this government's own law reform commission said would help address the problem in seniors' care. The law reform commission's final report, *Civil Rights In Saskatchewan Long-term Care Facilities*, said this:

Responses to the Consultation Paper overwhelmingly supported a mandatory residents' bill of rights for all long-term care homes. Only one response suggested that a bill of rights may not be necessary, as other avenues, such as regional or provincial policy guidelines, may give residents the same protection and respect. The Commission believes that the accessibility of a residents' bill of rights is a benefit over the already existing avenues.

And that can be found on page 9 of that report, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[12:15]

I'd like to point out something else the Law Reform Commission has to say about this.

A resident's bill of rights can be given legal recognition in several ways. The most straightforward is the approach adopted in Ontario and British Columbia: legislating a

uniform bill of rights applicable to all long-term care facilities. Manitoba, however, requires each long-term care home to develop a bill of rights in consultation with its residents, and sets out a minimum standard.

And that's on page 10. It goes on, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Commission prefers the Manitoba approach because it actively engages the facilities and the residents in designing protections for civil rights. Engaging these parties will assist in furthering the education function of the bill of rights. This approach also has the benefit of addressing several concerns expressed in response to the Consultation Paper. A minimum core content of rights prescribed by law ensures a baseline of equal civil rights in long-term care homes while, at the same time, allowing individual homes a role to play in enunciating these rights. For example, this would allow each facility to set its own visiting hours to conform to a legislated guideline stating that residents must be allowed to receive visitors at reasonable hours, instead of simply imposing exact hours upon facilities through legislation.

And that's on page 10, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So one of the very clear recommendations from this government's own Law Reform Commission is this, "Legislation should set out a minimum standard for a residents' bill of rights, with each long-term care home drafting its own document." And that's on page 10 as well of the Law Reform Commission's report.

Another one of the very clear recommendations from this government's own Law Reform Commission, this government's Law Reform Commission is this: "Each long-term care home should be required to prominently post its residents' bill of rights." Page 11.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, faced with repeated stories that continue to this day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, faced with this government's refusal to listen to the concerns, to really hear what the problems are and act, faced with this government's decision to actually scrap minimum care standards and faced with the recommendations of this government's own Law Reform Commission, we decided to introduce our own bill — this bill, Bill No. 606, *The Residents-in-care Bill of Rights Act* that guarantees respect, dignity, and safety for seniors in Saskatchewan homes.

Going back to the beginning of my speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that that's what I want for my mom and dad in their own home now. And if they ever have to move into long-term care — and I'm again knocking on wood; I like to think we'll be able to keep them in their home for a very long time — but that is exactly what I would want for my parents and would want for your parents and for every other senior in this province, is respect, dignity, and safety for seniors in Saskatchewan care homes.

Under this bill, Bill 606, each care home would be required to have a residents-in-care bill of rights created in consultation with residents and their families. And that piece is hugely important, Mr. Deputy Speaker: in consultation with residents

and their families. This legislation specifies what that bill of rights must contain at a minimum, again, at a minimum. It must speak to care plans that:

are specific to each resident [so that's personalized care];

are based on each resident's abilities, physical, social and emotional needs, as well as cultural and spiritual preferences.

It must speak to care plans that:

comply with the minimum quality of care standards established by the government [this provincial government] through regulations; and

are based on input from the resident, their family or their supporter.

So again, that piece is very important, having that input from the residents, their family, or if they don't have family, their supporter.

All of these components of this bill are crucial, but I think it's worth highlighting the clause regarding minimum — again, minimum — quality of care standards. This bill would require the provincial government to establish regulations respecting a minimum quality of care standards.

This bill of rights must also speak to:

the right of residents to be treated with courtesy and respect and in a way that promotes their dignity and individuality;

[It must specify] the right of residents to be sheltered, fed, dressed, groomed and cared for in a manner that is consistent with their needs;

[It must specify] the right of residents or their supporters to have the right to give or refuse consent to treatment, including medication, in accordance with the law;

[And it must specify] the right of residents, subject to safety requirements and the privacy rights of other residents, to be encouraged to exercise their freedom of choice whenever possible, including freedom to do the following:

exercise their choice of religion, culture and language;

communicate with, and have contact with and visits to and from friends, family and others in private if desired;

choose their recreational activities;

choose the personal items that each resident may keep in their rooms, when space permits;

select the clothing to be worn each day.

These are things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I think those of us who don't have someone in long-term or personal care or are

living on our own for that . . . just living on our own, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we all take for granted, that when you wake up in the morning you get to choose your own clothes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And that may sound like a small item, but I know that I've spoken to people who've talked about having a loved one in long-term care. And one particular person I'm thinking about was telling me about his grandmother who really cared about her personal appearance and would be so heartbroken on days where he would come to visit her, and his grandmother would be so distressed that she was dressed in things that don't match or that she didn't feel were comfortable for her.

So that being able to dress and choose what you want to wear in the morning is important, and it matters. Why would we expect that our seniors have any less than we have, Mr. Deputy Speaker? My six-year-old is allowed to choose her own clothes. Sometimes it's interesting what she chooses, but why would I expect that my six-year-old has more rights than my 81-year-old mother if she was in care to choose some of those things?

When it comes to recreational activities, I know that we don't all like the same thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I confess I'm not musically inclined. I'm not a singalong kind of gal. And I think if I were in long-term or personal care, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that wouldn't be my recreational activity of choice. I, despite having played the piano for eight years, that was not one of my gifts. I admit it. And I don't think anybody on the opposite side of the House wants to hear me sing despite heckling that.

But the opportunity to choose your own recreational activities . . . Some of the things that I'd like to do would be yoga perhaps, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or I like games. I think about the things that I like for myself and the opportunity to choose those things for myself as a woman who is 43 years old and living on my own versus someone who is 81 and living in a care home and not having that opportunity.

These things matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Why should we expect that those that we love who are living in long-term care and personal care homes have any less, have anything less of a quality of life than we have, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

So this bill must specify, I'll get back to Bill 606 more specifically here. This bill must specify:

the right of residents to be afforded reasonable privacy when being treated and cared for;

[It must specify] the right of residents to be provided with a safe and clean environment.

Again, why would we want any less for our seniors than we would want for ourself? And it must specify:

the right of residents or their supporters to transparency and accountability, including the right to all of the following:

to have ready access to copies of all laws, rules and

- policies affecting a service provided to the resident;
- to have ready access to a copy of the most recent routine inspection record of the facility;
- to be informed in advance of all charges, fees and other amounts that the resident must pay for accommodation and services received through the facility;
- to be informed of how to make a complaint to an authority outside the facility;
- to have his or her family or supporter informed of the matters described in this clause.

These, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are the basic elements that must be in each bill of rights. But again as this government's own Law Reform Commission recommended, the actual drafting of each bill of rights is left up to the care facility in consultation with residents and their supporters. This is very important for a few reasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is the preferable approach because it actively engages the facilities and the residents in designing protections for civil rights, and engaging these parties also assists in furthering the education function of the bill of rights. So the education piece is very important, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Every senior living in a care home deserves at a minimum to be offered regular meals, regular baths, and a minimum amount of one-on-one care. They deserve to have a caregiver help them to and from the bathroom in a timely manner. They deserve to know that when they ring a call bell, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is someone there who will answer it. There will be help coming when you need it. And that is not the case right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The reality is, what this government is doing right now is not working.

Passing this bill will be an important step to fixing our broken seniors' care system. The Minister of Health has so far said he is satisfied that the program guidelines for special care homes has a section about residents' rights and responsibilities, and that personal care home regulations already spell out residents' rights as well.

But that isn't good enough. What we see and what we've heard from families, from residents themselves, and from health care providers, that is not working. The reality is, the stories, Lynne Seaborne, Carrie Klassen, a number of other stories . . . Even in this last week since we've tabled this bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've been telephoned by special care aids, by licensed practical nurses, by families who continue to identify problems that they're experiencing now, despite this government's action fund that they've put in place in October.

Things are not getting better. This is a real problem. And the problem is a lack of staffing. That is the root, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You can't fix a problem if you don't recognize what the root is. You can try to band-aid over it as much as you want, but that problem still exists underneath. And you will continue to have horrible stories, absolutely horrifying — not just horrible — horrifying stories that emerge.

I'd like to tell you about some of what emerged out of the CEO

tour, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and again it all ties to a lack of staffing. At Stensrud Lodge in Saskatoon, "They can hear people crying for help in the evening because of staffing shortages. That's 1 to 25 care aid ratio on evenings."

We have, at Spruce Manor Special Care Home in Martensville: "Think that their care their loved one is getting is very good, however there isn't enough because staff are too busy." This one again, this jumps out for me. My mother had comments about this, again, when she heard about people waiting for the washroom, continent people, people who don't need a continent product having to go to the bathroom in their pants. My mom was horrified by that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

At Parkridge Centre . . . Pardon me, at Oliver Lodge there: "My husband was taught when he was a child not to pee his pants, and now they are telling him to just go in his pants. He tries to go to the bathroom by himself. They tell him he is at risk of falling." Mr. Deputy Speaker, it goes on and on. If you've taken a look at the CEO report, it all boils down to a lack of staff.

We have actually Maura Davies, the CEO of the largest health region in Saskatchewan, identifying . . . After the urgent action fund was released, Maura Davies, the CEO of the largest health region in Saskatchewan had this to say in October of 2013: "It won't ultimately address the larger issue of adequate staffing and the condition of some of our facilities." So the reality is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a staffing issue.

There's more from the CEO tour that emerged. Saskatoon Extencare, "Don't always get help when they need it and have to wait to get up." "Sometimes they need to get up at 6:30 a.m. even though breakfast isn't until 8 a.m." I don't know about you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but when I wake up, I'm a breakfast person. How do you start your day? You need some fuel in the body. You get going. Can you imagine being woken up . . . So maybe you're not even ready to get up in the first place, but having to wait to be fed a meal because there's no staff to be able to help you . . . We've heard ratios on night shifts of 1 to 19, 1 to 30. How can one person be expected to tend to the needs of 30 people, Mr. Deputy Speaker? How is that acceptable?

[12:30]

This is a staffing issue. This is a staffing issue, and this government refuses to accept that. And by putting in basic minimum care standards, we can ensure that we are at least staffing our facilities properly. The Law Reform Commission said Saskatchewan would benefit from a legislated residents' bill of rights. It says, "A legislated bill of rights has official status that emphasizes the importance of the document and encourages compliance."

The current situation for seniors in care is far from adequate. The government's approach is not working, and its guidelines are either not good enough or they're not being followed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A law is much more significant than a regulation or a guideline. We have a law, regulation, guideline. Law sends a much stronger message. And we do know how quickly this government waters down regulations and guidelines, so we want the rights of residents in care to be codified in law.

Our proposed legislation goes further than the government's current guidelines. For example our proposed legislation requires care plans to comply with minimum quality of care standards which the government would have to set out in regulations, not in guidelines, not in guidelines. And it requires that the bill of rights be posted in prominent locations and easily acceptable to residents and staff. It is more specific in the enumeration of rights, including the right of seniors to choose their recreational activities and to select their clothing to be worn every day, whereas the government's guidelines are very broad, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It also spells out specific rights of residents or their supporters to transparency and accountability, including how to make a complaint to an authority outside the facility.

So I do hope this government will agree to work with us to pass this bill. I know that people in Saskatchewan . . . I've had very positive feedback this last week, and this is the right thing to do to ensure that we have a base level of care for all our seniors in long-term and personal care homes across Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 606, *The Residents-in-care Bill of Rights Act, 2014* be now read a second time.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Riversdale has moved that Bill No. 606, *The Residents-in-care Bill of Rights Act, 2014* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise to just say a couple of words in support of my colleague, the member from Saskatoon Riversdale, and Bill No. 606, *The Residents-in-care Bill of Rights Act*. Just to say off the top, Mr. Speaker, I know that this is an issue that certainly in my family we've been following very closely and with a great amount of interest. And I know that the experience we have in the McCall household is not unlike that which has shot through the province in terms of the way that people are having these concerns come forward to make sure that their loved ones are getting the care that they need in the way that they need it.

I think, Mr. Speaker, of a letter that was to the editor in the *Leader-Post* this week from a constituent of mine, Mr. Don Gunderson. And the point that he made very succinctly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that individualized care plans need not conflict with minimum care standards. They're not mutually exclusive. And you know, he's a pretty astute guy, but I don't think you have to be as astute as Don Gunderson is, and as I know him to be in terms of his interest in public affairs and in terms of how he comes to this realization in terms of the experience his family has had, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to know that minimum standards need not conflict or need not impede individualized care plans.

And I guess that's where we arrive with Bill No. 606 in terms of trying to bring into law that minimum standard of care, something that, I might add, Mr. Speaker, was recommended to this government by their very own Law Reform Commission here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I very much support this bill. I hope that the

government can see past their own sort of narrow way of pursuing their own agenda to possibly see things that they can support in this legislation for the betterment of those residents in care and the difference that I think it could make to their lives and to the well-being of themselves and to their families. With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that there are other matters that require attention from members in the House and, with that I would move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 606.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 606, *The Residents-in-care Bill of Rights Act, 2014*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:36.]

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