



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

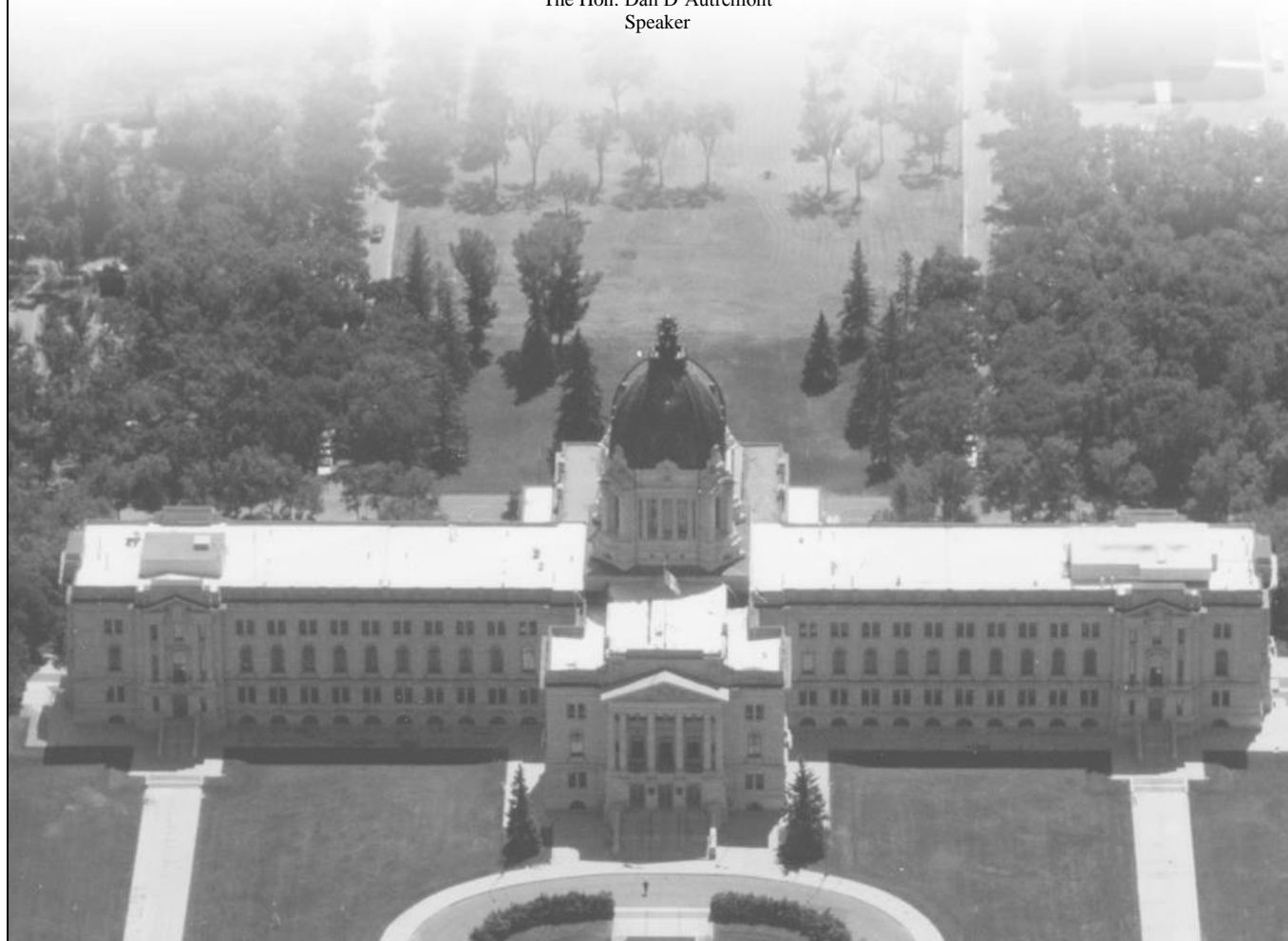
of the

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, Hon. 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, Hon. Mark	SP	Regina Coronation Park
Doherty, Hon. Kevin	SP	Regina Northeast
Doke, Larry	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Hon. Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, 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
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Paul	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Moe, Hon. Scott	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Hon. 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, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Hon. Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Hon. Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Vacant		Lloydminster

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I'd like to introduce a good friend of mine seated in the west gallery, Mitch Graw. Mitch, you'd like to give us a wave up there.

Mitch has been a friend of mine for many years, along with he and his parents. He's a fourth-year student at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan], soon to graduate. Mitch is a tireless worker, Mr. Speaker. He is an excellent, very personable young man. And he worked last year in the building for Exec Council and got to know a lot of us then. We appreciated all his hard work he did, and we know that he's a young man that's got a very bright future ahead of him. I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming him to his Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the legislature, it's my pleasure to introduce some guests in your gallery. We have here today Carrie Klassen, Kevin Klassen, Lynne Seaborne, Don Gunderson, Verna Hauck, Rose Donovan, Bob Starkey, and Marie Starkey. These folks here are here today who recognize that this government's drop-in-the-bucket approach last year did very little to solve the seniors' care crisis here in this province. I just wanted to point out that Marie is a former care aid, and Marie and her husband, Bob, came all the way to Regina from Estevan to advocate for better seniors' care.

With that, I ask all my colleagues to join in welcoming these guests to their legislature.

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the House today, 19 grade 10 students from Melville Comprehensive. I'll have the opportunity to meet with the students here a little bit later, and we'll get our picture taken. They're accompanied today by their teachers, Stuart Wilson and Brandon Needham. And I ask all members to welcome them to their legislature today.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member from Melville and briefly welcome these students. I met with them briefly as they came through the

doors.

But particularly I'd like to welcome my friend Stuart Wilson who is certainly a strong community leader, a great teacher, and also of course — she's not here today — but his wife, Theresa Wilson, who's a school board member for Christ the Teacher and a strong community leader in the region there as well.

So I ask all members to welcome these students and these teachers to their Assembly. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce in the west gallery Ms. Beth Kidd who's joining us in the Assembly today. Beth is the senior manager of external relations with AstraZeneca. And I know many of us will have a chance to chat with her later this evening at the reception being hosted by Canada's research-based pharmaceutical companies. So welcome to your Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition that calls for greater protection for Saskatchewan citizens from developers who default on fixed-price contracts with the Saskatchewan government.

And this is what a local political commentator had to say about this when the government allowed a private developer to default on a fixed-price contract. And I quote:

It is the latest indication that [the] Premier . . . seems unwilling to do anything to displease business . . . even when he knows business is dead wrong and even if it means his government is failing on its promises to deliver low-income housing.

Mr. Speaker, essentially this allows government to let private developers back out of fixed-price contracts without any penalties and setting a dangerous precedent for this type of default.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the government to recognize that there are indeed desperate homeless people in our province, and to immediately reverse its policy of now allowing private developers with whom the government has close relationships to, to default on fixed-price contracts for affordable housing projects.

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

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents as it relates to

the unsafe conditions created by that government on Dewdney Avenue by their lack of planning of traffic and causing Dewdney Avenue to be inundated with dangerous heavy-haul trucks that quite simply shouldn't be on Dewdney Avenue. They're calling on that government to, of course, get those trucks off of Dewdney Avenue. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on the provincial government to immediately take action as it relates to the unacceptable danger, disturbance, and infrastructure damage caused by heavy-haul truck traffic on Dewdney Avenue west of the city centre, to ensure the safety and well-being of communities, families, residents, and users; and that those actions and plans should include rerouting the heavy-haul truck traffic, receive provincial funding, and be developed through consultation with the city of Regina, communities, and residents.

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

These petitions are signed by concerned residents in Regina. I so submit.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition in support of better seniors' care in this province, Mr. Speaker. The folks who have signed this petition point out that families have spoken out about staff shortages resulting in a lack of staff to help their loved ones with basic needs while in care facilities; that this government has removed the regulations requiring a minimum standard of care for seniors; that the chronic understaffing in seniors' care facilities resulted in unanswered calls for help, seniors being left unattended on toilets, and infrequent bathing for residents. These are just a few of the things that the folks have pointed out, Mr. Speaker.

The prayer reads:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the provincial government to immediately undertake meaningful steps to improve the quality of seniors' care, including creating more spaces and more choices for seniors; ensuring higher standards of care in public facilities, private facilities, and home care; ensuring appropriate staffing levels in seniors' care facilities; restoring regulations that provide minimum standards of care; and providing more support to help seniors remain independent in their own homes for as long as they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by folks in Regina. I so submit.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to present a

petition that condemns this government's dangerous smart meter program. The undersigned residents want to bring to the attention of the Assembly the following:

Whereas this government knew about major safety concerns related to its smart meter project; whereas the government ignored those safety concerns and plowed ahead with its program; and whereas the safety of Saskatchewan families was put at significant risk, the prayer reads as follows:

They respectfully request that this Legislative Assembly take the following action: to cause the provincial government to take responsibility for its failure to act on readily available information about safety concerns with its smart meter program, including through the immediate resignation of the Minister Responsible for SaskPower, and a fully independent inquiry into the concerning chain of events that severely compromised the safety of Saskatchewan families.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens from the city of Saskatoon. I so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Remembering Sister Jean Leier

Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to honour an outstanding citizen of Prince Albert, Sister Jean Leier, who sadly passed away on October 29th. A funeral service was held for her yesterday in Prince Albert.

Sister Jean was born on March 30, 1939 in Mildred, Saskatchewan. She spent her early years with her family on their farm near Mildred. In 1960, she joined the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary. Sister Jean then spent her time teaching in Prince Albert as well as in The Pas and Laurier, Manitoba, eventually becoming the principal of St. Mark School in Prince Albert just prior to my attending in 1976-77.

Mr. Speaker, Sister Jean took on many roles in the community, most notably helping to open Marion Aquatics in 1977 and then managing the public pool until she recently fell ill. She will be remembered as a motherly figure who gave her love and time to the students she taught both in the classroom and in the water. Sister Jean will be remembered as firm but fair, also funny and kind.

When Marion Aquatics faced financial challenges in 2012 following a temporary closure, Sister Jean became the reluctant face of a fundraising campaign which saved the pool. Marion Aquatics and the service she lovingly provided to her church and the people of Prince Albert will be Sister Jean's legacy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in honouring the great contributions Sister Jean made in her community and in offering condolences to her family and friends. Thank you.

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

Saskatoon Tribal Council Vampire Gala

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 30th I had the pleasure to attend the Saskatoon Tribal Council's Vampire Gala at TCU Place in Saskatoon. This event supports the Home Fires Foundation and the White Buffalo Youth Lodge.

This was one of the best events I have ever been to. The hall was amazingly decorated. The food was great. The dancing and entertainment was fantastic. And it was most impressive to see so many people out to support such an important initiative.

White Buffalo Youth Lodge is located in my constituency and the work they do to engage youth in the core neighbourhood is truly remarkable. They understand that connecting with young people requires a multi-faceted approach that provides academic, cultural, and spiritual support. Their vision for a city where everyone is able to prosper is one that I'm sure all members here can agree with.

The Home Fires Foundation is an important project that has been started by the Saskatoon Tribal Council that seeks to improve the quality of life for children, youth, and families in Saskatoon. Their mission is to help families challenged by social and economic hardships and to make their own safe places, their own home fires.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating Tribal Chief Felix Thomas and Tribal Vice-chief Mark Arcand and all the staff and volunteers at the Saskatoon Tribal Council on their ghoulishly delightful gala, and thank them for all the great work they do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

2014 Hill Business Dinner

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 30th I, along with the members from Regina Northeast and South, had the pleasure of attending the Hill Business Dinner, the largest event with the Paul J. Hill School of Business at the University of Regina. With over 500 in attendance, the night attracts students, corporate representatives, faculty, alumni, and government leaders. This 41st annual event was filled with good food, socializing, as well as networking opportunities for students.

Last week's dinner sold out in only nine days and provided a great crowd for the keynote speaker, Donald Walker, CEO [chief executive officer] of Magna International. Also fitting for the business dinner's theme, Road to Success, Don shared stories of perseverance within the business world, as well as the importance of a technical education. Don was also able to share his insights into the business side of the manufacturing sector, a sector where many of the students present could someday be employed.

Yet even more importantly, opportunities such as the Hill Business Dinner brought together the current business leaders of the day with the future business leaders of tomorrow. Events such as this dinner allow students to meet with prospective

employers and start to forge very important relationships.

Mr. Speaker, these are the students that are going to keep our economy moving forward and keep Saskatchewan strong for generations to come. I'd like all members to join me in congratulating the Paul J. Hill School of Business for their very successful 41st annual dinner, and look forward to seeing the students of today become the leaders of tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mendel Art Gallery Celebrates Golden Anniversary

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Saturday I had the pleasure of attending the golden anniversary celebrations for the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon. The theme for the evening was Bewitched, and indeed many magical memories were recalled and created.

Gregory Burke, the executive director and CEO of both the Mendel Art Gallery and the Remail Modern Art Gallery, recognized the generosity and vision of the founders: "These founders and supporters include patron Fred Mendel and family, then mayor Sidney Buckwold, the city of Saskatoon, the Mendel Art Gallery Foundation, and many hundreds of board members, volunteers, staff, donors, and sponsors — and not least, artists — over five decades of the life of the gallery."

There was much excitement in the air with talk of the Remail Modern Art Gallery, the next step in Saskatoon's commitment to a thriving public art scene. It will certainly be a crown jewel on Saskatoon's lovely riverbank when it opens in 2016.

The gala featured three homegrown Saskatoon musicians, Jon Ballantyne on jazz piano, Thomas Yu on classical piano, and my good friend, Karrnel Sawitsky, on fiddle.

I would like to congratulate organizers Darrell Bell and Ineke Knight and their outstanding committee for creating such a memorable event to pay homage to the important role the Mendel Art Gallery has played in Saskatoon's history.

Funds raised at the gala will support an exciting new annual lecture program at the Remail Modern. And of course a huge thank you to the patrons, both past and present, without whose generous philanthropy these important institutions would not exist, in particular Fred Mendel and Ellen Remail, who through their vision and generosity inspire all of us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[13:45]

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

Better Together Food Drive

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Halloween night I had the opportunity to volunteer alongside the Moose Jaw Generals hockey team in the ninth annual Better Together food drive. More than 400 volunteers from across this city

worked for five hours on Friday night to collect, sort, package, and load food donations for the Moose Jaw and District Food Bank.

This Halloween tradition in Moose Jaw is an important event, typically supplying 50 per cent of the food that the food bank will use in a year. Food collection from all areas of the city began at 6 p.m. and by 11 p.m. all of the food donations had been sorted, packaged, and loaded into semi-trailers.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that this year's food drive was once again a great success, collecting more than 54,000 pounds of food for the food bank. It is incredible how much the volunteers accomplished in such a short time.

Organizers are already looking forward to next year's food drive, and spokesperson Karen MacNaughton said, "That will be our 10th annual. So we should be celebrating 10 years of success and generosity in our city."

Mr. Speaker, the Better Together food drive is a great event which highlights the spirit of giving and the kindness of all Moose Javians. I ask all members to join me in recognizing the donors, sponsors, and volunteers who made this year's food drive another success.

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

Celebrating Seniors Volunteer Awards Banquet

Mr. Marchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October the 5th, I had the opportunity to bring greetings on behalf of the Minister of Health to the Celebrating Seniors Volunteer Awards Banquet hosted in Regina by the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism.

The Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism plays a vital role in raising the profile of issues that are important to seniors in our province. The Celebrating Seniors Volunteer Awards celebrate the many positive contributions seniors make in our province and the dedication demonstrated by the many seniors who improve the overall quality of life in our communities through their volunteer efforts.

Twenty-eight outstanding volunteers were nominated for awards in 10 different categories. Of particular significance to me was the nomination of Ms. Elsie Mironuck in the centenarian category. Ms. Mironuck was my principal at then Sherwood Elementary School in Regina, now Elsie Mironuck Elementary School. Mr. Speaker, aside from the children, no greater, no greater honour to an educator than to have a facility named for them.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor presented pins to each of the award recipients. Following the awards reception and an excellent dinner, Jim Hopson, president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Roughriders, described the journey of transformation for the Saskatchewan Roughriders and how our Roughriders have become the pride of the CFL [Canadian Football League].

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members to join me in recognizing the

important work of the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism and congratulating all of the award recipients. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Smart Meter Discussion

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NDP [New Democratic Party] can't seem to get any traction with the truth, so they have started to make stuff up. Yesterday they did it twice. First the Leader of the Opposition misrepresented what was said in the smart meter report. And then just a few minutes later, the NDP member for Nutana completely misrepresented what the minister said in committee.

The Leader of the Opposition kept repeating the false claim that the government didn't order the smart meters to be removed when it says right in the report, on page 40 and 41, that the government ordered the removal of the meters on July 30th.

Then the member for Saskatoon Nutana quoted the minister as saying in committee that the smart meter project was "going quite well and running according to plan." Mr. Speaker, as it turns out, the minister didn't say either of those things. He didn't say the project was going quite well. The CEO of SaskPower did. And the minister didn't say the project was running according to plan. The chief financial officer of SaskPower said that.

It kind of reminds me when their old leader, Dwain Lingenfelter, spliced together two clips of the Premier to create a completely made-up quote. Mr. Speaker, day after day we see an increasingly shrill, angry, and desperate opposition. And now they are even reverting to the same dishonest tactics that were so soundly rejected in the 2011 election. Mr. Speaker, they may have a different leader over there, but it's the same old NDP.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Smart Meter Program

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, we know that the SaskPower minister was adamant that he did not know about safety concerns with smart meters. He said this over and over again, Mr. Speaker. Only after we brought out proof that he did know, Mr. Speaker, the minister admitted, yes, he did know. And actually he did know that they sent officials down to Philadelphia in 2012, Mr. Speaker, to investigate concerns.

But the opposition and the media, Mr. Speaker, have had to drag out every bit of information from this minister. And yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Premier defended the minister for repeatedly saying he hadn't heard anything about major safety concerns. The Premier said the minister was answering — get this — on a go-forward basis, so it was fine to completely neglect to mention what he actually knew.

Mr. Speaker, my question is specifically for the Premier. What

does it mean if the minister is now answering on a go-forward basis and that's why he wasn't forthcoming with what he knew?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I am so glad that the Leader of the Opposition has raised that scrum. That scrum was precipitated by questions he would have authorized from the critic, from the member for Nutana who stood up in the House and implied very clearly — and attributed, frankly, through that implication — a quote by the minister in committee, Mr. Speaker, to a question on the efficacy of the functioning of the smart meters.

So we checked *Hansard*, as we should. Whenever these members say anything, you need to check the record. And here's exactly what happened that day in committee. That member was asking a question actually about the budget for smart meters. The answer she quoted didn't come from the minister at all. It came from Robert Watson, the president of the company who has since, Mr. Speaker, resigned as a result of the issue.

Mr. Speaker, she knew, she knew very well that the minister didn't say those things in the first place. Oh yes, she did. She also knew she was asking not about the efficacy of the functioning of the meters but whether it's on budget.

Mr. Speaker, we got these tactics from Dwain Lingenfelter in the past. We thought the era was over, Mr. Speaker. We thought that, given that there's only nine of them over there, they would have learned. Obviously they haven't learned a thing. Does the Leader of the Opposition find those kinds of Lingenfelter tactics acceptable today in the Legislative Assembly?

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the question to the Premier was whether or not it is acceptable for ministers to answer on a go-forward basis, and is that the rationale that allows a minister to not be forthcoming with what he knows. Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't expect that kind of behaviour from my toddler, let alone a minister of the Crown, let alone the Premier of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the minister have been hiding behind the difference between the 3.2 version of the meter and the 3.3 version of the meter. My question to the Premier: does he actually know the physical difference between those two versions?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House the member from Nutana said very carefully — she's a lawyer, she would know what she could say and not say in terms of the rules of the House — she said, and I quote:

Mr. Speaker, when I asked in committee for updates in how the smart meter program was going, [by the way, we know now that wasn't her question] the answers I received included, "It's going . . . [actually quite well.]" "The project is running to plan."

Her quote continues: "Not once did the minister bother to reveal that he was aware of major safety concerns with Sensus . . ."

Mr. Speaker, we checked the *Hansard* from that committee meeting. She never asked, she was never answered to those questions by the minister. The minister never said those words. The president of the Crown that has since resigned said those words, Mr. Speaker. Her inference of course is something different. She would like the public, she would like the media to believe — she didn't hand out the *Hansard* — she and the Leader of the Opposition would like the media to believe that the minister said those things. He did not.

The Leader of the Opposition would like to forget the opening to yesterday's question period when he was caught doing exactly the same thing. Mr. Speaker, no wonder there's nine of them over there. There are lots of questions to ask about smart meters without having to make them up on the other side of the House.

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

Smart Meter Field Tests

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, time and time again that Minister Responsible for SaskPower has sat on his hands, has not told Saskatchewan people what he knows, has not told the media what he knows, Mr. Speaker. And the Premier now is covering up for the minister not telling the full story.

Mr. Speaker, the question to the Premier was whether or not he actually knows the difference between the 3.2 and the 3.3 versions. They've been hiding behind this fact. Well the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, there is no physical difference between the 3.2 version and the 3.3 version. They are physically identical.

PricewaterhouseCoopers' report says the 3.2 version of the meters used in Philadelphia were ". . . identical to those used in the Hanley field test . . . physically identical to the meters eventually installed in the 105,000 Saskatchewan residences." So the 3.2 version of the meter that was starting on fire in homes in Philadelphia, Mr. Speaker, was physically identical to the meters that this government installed on houses.

Now my question is for the Premier, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not asking for his bizarre, go-forward rationale explanations of what's going on. I'm asking, Mr. Speaker, for the whole truth, and he knows it, Mr. Speaker. When did the Premier and the SaskPower minister know that the meters that were installed on the homes in Philadelphia that were lighting on fire were physically identical to the meters that they installed on 105,000 Saskatchewan homes?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to the meters, according to the Pennsylvania media reports, the fires started in 2012 in March. SaskPower became aware of the fires the first week of September through industry media coverage.

The pilot in Hanley started in June of 2012, prior to SaskPower's knowledge of the issues in Pennsylvania. The

meter installation was completed prior to September. SaskPower wrote to Sensus and sought assurances which they received with respect to that.

The meters that the member opposite is referencing, Mr. Speaker, the manufacturer went on to add a device to detect hot sockets in the 3.3 version, model, which gave SaskPower further assurance that the manufacturer believed that the socket and other issues related to the meters had been addressed.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the engineer's report says that there were major flaws with the physical design of the Sensus 3.3 meters, which again were physically identical to the 3.2 version that the minister knew were catching on fire in Philadelphia. Now this is important, Mr. Speaker. The biggest flaw is that the meters were not properly sealed to keep moisture and dust out and there was no way for moisture to drain.

The engineer's report says, "... we are of the opinion that moisture and contaminants within the meter has been a major factor in the meter failures and ensuing fires." But the level of due diligence, Mr. Speaker, has been so pathetically weak from this minister and from this government, Mr. Speaker, that they just took the manufacturer's word that everything was fine.

Again, Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier: when did he learn that the meters installed on the homes in Philadelphia that were lighting on fire were physically identical to the meters that they were installing on 105,000 Saskatchewan homes?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Hanley tests that were done, SaskPower removed the 3.2 meters earlier than they originally planned. It was always the plan to replace the 3.2 version with the 3.3 version. SaskPower pulled early because they heard of hot socket incidents from people. As a result, SaskPower's due diligence, they removed and tested the meters from Hanley.

Those meters were certified, reached industry standards, and also survived a tornado in July. There were no issues with the meters tested, which gave SaskPower confidence that the PECO incident was a hot socket and not the meter itself. SaskPower went one step further, Mr. Speaker, and sought written assurances from Sensus with respect to the meters. The manufacturer, Mr. Speaker, added a hot socket device to ensure that they were safe, Mr. Speaker, and that was the best advice that was given at the time.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, once again this minister does not have his facts straight and is not actually saying what the concern is here. Here's the report, Mr. Speaker, from the engineers: "... we are of the opinion that moisture and contaminants within the meter has been a major factor in the meter failures and ensuing fires." And yet, Mr. Speaker, this government installed the physically identical meters from the Philadelphia experience here in Saskatchewan.

[14:00]

On October 10th, 2012, the Philadelphia Electric Company announced it was abandoning Sensus entirely and going with meters from Swiss company Landis+Gyr instead. Clearly PECO in Philadelphia knew there were major problems with the Sensus meters so, Mr. Speaker, they listened to advice. They asked the right questions, and they switched meters to a completely different company.

You'd think, Mr. Speaker, that would have been a wake-up call to this minister. You'd think he would have turned on his brain and started asking some questions that needed to be asked, Mr. Speaker. This government actually sent a delegation to Philadelphia to look into the problems that they were experiencing.

My specific question to the Premier, and again I'm not asking for his go-forward analysis here, whatever that means. I'm asking for the whole truth. When did the Premier and the SaskPower minister learn that PECO had completely abandoned Sensus? When did they learn that?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, the incidents that the member references took place in 2012. SaskPower became aware of those concerns in 2012 in September. The pilot project for Hanley started in June of 2012, and the meter installation was completed prior to September. SaskPower wrote to Sensus and got written assurances from them.

Mr. Speaker, SaskPower pulled the meters early because of the hot socket incidents that were reported by PECO and, as part of that due diligence, they removed and tested the meters from Hanley. The meters had been certified. They had reached industry standards, and they had survived also a tornado, with respect to them, Mr. Speaker.

They were judged to have no incidents, no issues with the meters that were tested. And as a result of that, SaskPower moved forward in an appropriate manner. They also then received assurances that there was a device had been added to the 3.3 model that gave SaskPower further assurance, Mr. Speaker, that the manufacturer believed it to be a socket issue and not a meter issue.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, when the minister sends officials down to Philadelphia to look into fires, when he's been briefed on this in 2012, when he knows there are concerns, you think he would ask some tough questions. You think he would be concerned, Mr. Speaker, that the meters they're installing in 105,000 homes are physically identical to the meters in Philadelphia starting the fires.

According to PricewaterhouseCoopers' report, SaskPower actually started testing Landis+Gyr meters as an alternative supply. And that started in October 2012, exactly around the time that PECO completely abandoned Sensus and went with the Landis+Gyr meters instead. But for some reason, Mr. Speaker, this minister, this government just took the

manufacturer at its word, saying everything was fine.

The government knew the meters were dangerous, and they installed them on 105,000 homes here in Saskatchewan. Again, Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier, and I'm asking for whole truth, not the go-forward rationale that he has now condoned coming from that minister, which is a shocking new precedent from this government: why did the government start testing the meters in October 2012? And why did it ultimately choose to stick with the Sensus meters, knowing that they were physically identical to the meters that caused problems in Philadelphia?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I think we've answered this question twice just previously with respect to this. The meters, while they may be physically identical, the meters also had a device that was added to them to detect hot sockets, Mr. Speaker, which gave SaskPower further assurance.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the members opposite want to try and twist this to somehow suggest that the Government of Saskatchewan sent people down to Philadelphia, when indeed the government didn't at all. SaskPower officials sent people down to take a look at that, and they also received all of the assurances that they required to make sure that they were comfortable going forward. And that's exactly what they did and that's exactly what happened, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, can the Premier please explain what role the Minister for SaskPower had in choosing and selecting the Hanley field test location?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, it would be based on the advice that SaskPower would give with respect to any testing program.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the question was to the Premier, not to the minister. In June 2012 that government announced that Hanley was chosen as the location for the smart meter field test. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers' report, "Hanley was selected over the locations initially proposed and was decided with ministerial input." I repeat, ministerial input.

The Premier shouldn't answer this on this new go-forward-basis nonsense that he's evading accountability on. He should be providing the whole truth. Can the Premier please explain why there was ministerial input on the selection of Hanley for the smart meter field test in which this government strapped dangerous smart meters on the homes of Saskatchewan families?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, any time that the officials

from SaskPower would come forward with recommendations around anything related to smart meters, whether it be options about test locations or any of those kinds of things, we would simply expect and be advised by the SaskPower officials as to what their best view of where these tests should take place. Mr. Speaker, that would be exactly what would happen. Then we would take a look at the information based on it and we would approve it, based on the fact that SaskPower officials were clear in their test facilities and clear in terms of making the recommendation to the Government of Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, we're not asking hypothetical questions and we're getting hypothetical answers from the minister. We're asking, what actually happened, Mr. Speaker?

It's clear from the report that the choice of Hanley was chosen with the minister's input. That's what it says in the report. So when you have the SaskPower minister rejecting proposed locations and actually selecting the current field location, or what was the field location, it's pretty clear that that minister's fingerprints have been all over this from the get-go.

Again, this Premier shouldn't be answering this in his new evade-accountability, go-forward basis. He should be providing the whole truth. Can the Premier tell us what other locations were recommended and why did the minister overrule those locations in favour of Hanley?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, when asked that question about a . . . It's interesting. The member opposite when he's asked questions that he would consider to be of a technical nature he said, those questions should not be answered by a politician. But when the shoe is on the other foot, when you apply a different standard that the NDP always want to apply in these situations, Mr. Speaker, when they want to apply a different standard, it's a totally different situation. It's not how they would do it, it's how someone else would do it based on the advice of officials.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan, based on the information always provided by SaskPower, always made the same decisions based on that information, which was to go forward, which was always the recommendation given by SaskPower.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The question to the minister was pretty straightforward. No answer. But we know in June 2012 the SaskPower minister was so hands-on on this smart meter file that he overruled initial proposals for the field test location, and the minister selected Hanley. But when physically identical smart meters were lighting on fire in Philadelphia and when a Philadelphia electrical company was scrapping its deal with Sensus and going with a different smart meter manufacturer instead, and providing direct warnings to Saskatchewan, the minister was nowhere to be found. It doesn't make sense and it's not believable.

To the Premier: how is it acceptable that that minister was so engaged on the selection of Hanley as a field test location, but was entirely negligent when he learned of major safety concerns with the meters he was strapping to hundreds of thousands of peoples' homes all across Saskatchewan?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the Hanley tests were judged by the SaskPower officials to be successful for a number of reasons. The meters had been reporting the hourly readings by 90.4 per cent of the time. Mr. Speaker, there were 220 times when a meter didn't respond to a reading given in a given day. Out of a possible 28,654 meter days, that's over a 99.2 per cent achievement. And of course that was the reason, Mr. Speaker, that SaskPower was again recommending to the Government of Saskatchewan to go forward with respect to any kind of program around smart meters.

Mr. Speaker, that information would be provided to the government of the day. The government of the day would simply take a look at that information, act upon the recommendation by SaskPower officials, and move forward, which of course is exactly what they did.

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

Provision of Care for Seniors

Ms. Chartier: — Last week, a continuing care aid in Saskatoon wrote that seniors in care were still "Missing baths for up to three weeks in a row." No bath, Mr. Speaker, for three weeks in a row. That is completely unacceptable, and it's time for this government to take that seriously. To the minister: how can he explain that seniors are still missing baths for up to three weeks in a row?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm aware of a facility of Saskatoon for a two-week period of time where there were issues with trying to fill some staffing positions because of some sick time that was taken by some of the existing staff.

Mr. Speaker, there were accommodations that were made to residents who did miss their regular scheduled bath either to be given a different date for their bath during that two-week period. As well, Mr. Speaker, the staff has informed the ministry, the ministry has informed me that during that period when there were regularly scheduled baths that were missing, that a sponge bath was provided each day, morning and night, for every single one of those residents.

Mr. Speaker, we are striving to provide better care for residents within long-term care facilities in this province. I think the public will know that over the last seven years, over 700 full-time equivalent positions in long-term care alone have been provided. The funding has been provided for this government, and we're also embarking on renewing the existing facilities across this province, 15 long-term care facilities either in planning or already built by this government.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, this minister can pretend that this is an isolated incident, but we know this is widespread across Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Here is what James Ford, the continuing care aid from Saskatoon says, "If the government is actually serious about seniors' care in Saskatchewan, it must immediately solve this embarrassing problem. Allowing seniors to spend weeks lying in filth is a grotesque human rights abuse." Carrie Klassen and the others who have joined us today agree with that.

This government has no end of money for its toxic lean pet project: \$40 million for one American lean consultant, \$3,500 per day for each Japanese sensei, \$2,000 for travel for each Japanese sensei, \$600 per day for each Japanese interpreter. But this government is completely neglecting the most basic aspects of seniors' care.

To the minister: does he think it's acceptable for seniors to spend weeks at a time lying in filth, yes or no?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the public will know that in terms of the investments that we've made in long-term care over the last seven years, certainly we have moved forward with replacing 15 facilities across this province. Nearly 10 per cent of the long-term care facilities in this province have either been replaced or are currently under construction to be replaced.

We've also invested dollars to the point where, despite the fact that the number of long-term care beds have remained fairly static over that seven-year period, 437 care aids have been hired, full-time equivalent positions; 195 LPNs [licensed practical nurses]; and 113 RNs [registered nurses], Mr. Speaker. There is no doubt that this government has invested to the point where over 700 more full-time equivalents are providing care for the same number of residents within the system.

Mr. Speaker, we're also ensuring that we are investing \$10 million in one-time dollars, 700 pieces of equipment, into long-term care that will go straight to providing additional care as well as additional training for those staff members, Mr. Speaker — a far cry from what the NDP proposed for long-term care when they were in government.

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

Ms. Chartier: — This government's approach to seniors' care is absolutely appalling, Mr. Speaker. In the Throne Speech, there was nothing new for seniors' care — problem solved. Instead this government just patted itself on the back, talked about its grossly inadequate one-time payment fund from last year, and pretended that all is well.

When residents, families, and front-line staff are telling us that seniors are still not getting baths for weeks at a time, that they're lying in filth, that their basic needs are being neglected

because of short staffing, that should be a wake-up call for this government, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: how many concerns does this government need to hear before it will finally stop neglecting the basics in seniors' care?

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, one only has to refer to a letter to the editor that was drafted a year ago by the Saskatchewan Council on Aging and Age-Friendly Saskatoon where they say — and I quote, and I wish the members would acknowledge this — I quote:

The reason for the LTC bed capacity problem isn't complex. Saskatchewan stopped investing in new subsidized LTC starting in the mid-1990s. Thus the number of beds and dollars for staff began to fall at just about the time the population of older adults and others . . . began increasing.

Mr. Speaker, the solution for seniors' care in this province under the NDP was this: they closed 19 long-term care facilities. They closed 1,200 beds in this province, and they proposed to radically jack up the rate that seniors would pay in this province to the point where seniors would have to go on welfare because they wouldn't be able to afford senior care. That's seniors' care under the NDP, not under this government.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cancellation of Reception

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I would like to announce that the reception for Ron Kruseniski has been cancelled today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 32 through 41.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled responses to questions 32 through 41.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Tochor, seconded by Mr. Lawrence.]

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure this

afternoon following question period to enter into this debate, a debate, as the Clerk pointed out, which has been going on for a few days here in the Assembly. And over the course of the days, Mr. Speaker, I've appreciated the chance to hear from quite a few of the members.

Not surprisingly, I've especially appreciated the comments from members of our caucus on the New Democratic side, in hearing their views on the Throne Speech, but more importantly than that, hearing how they view the Throne Speech through the lens of their constituents, through the concerns and the priorities that they have for the people that they represent, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's an important way for us all to approach the Throne Speech on this occasion as we consider the aspects to it.

And I'll have to say, Mr. Speaker, it was a fairly stark contrast between the approach that we saw with members on our opposition side with the approach that we saw with government members in how they addressed the Throne Speech. You know, when we heard the speeches and the comments coming from government members, there was some consistent patterns that we saw through their words and through their viewpoints. We saw a whole lot of looking backwards, you know, a whole lot of time, Mr. Speaker, spent in the past.

We saw a lot of hyperpartisan and overly ideological viewpoints brought forward . . . and arguments. And we also saw, Mr. Speaker, a real obsession, a real obsession with talking about us, which I think is an interesting approach that the members have. You know, I guess it's fine if members opposite want to spend and chew up the clock and use their time to be talking about the opposition for the lion's share of their speeches. I suppose that's their right. But on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we will stay focused on what matters to Saskatchewan people. We will stay focused on what matters to constituents. We will stay focused on what really counts.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into some of the comments specifically around the Throne Speech, I do want to provide a few thanks yours. In this business of politics, we rely on a whole lot of people to support us, a whole lot of people to give encouragement, to give advice. And that of course is very true in all of our situations, but I want to express that personally.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank my team of MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. Any observer to the Assembly could know that we're a small team at present, but I'm incredibly proud of our team. I'm incredibly proud of their dedication, of their commitment to the issues and their ability to work together and their support. So I thank all of the opposition members of the caucus.

I also want to thank our staff in the caucus office who work tremendously hard and do a great job of supporting us. I want to thank our staff in our constituency offices who keep the fires burning at home and take care of the needs of our constituents and ensure that we're plugged in to what is going on. And I want to thank the folks that also work in party office that work hard to do the parts and activities that all parties need to have done. I want to thank them for that, thank them for their service and their commitment to this province.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, I absolutely want to thank the good

people of Saskatoon Massey Place. It's a true honour to serve them, and I'm always appreciative of the interactions that we have, whether it's in the park or the grocery store or around the city. I want to thank the constituents of Saskatoon Massey Place for the true honour to be able to serve them here in this House.

I also, Mr. Speaker, want to thank my family, especially Ruth and my daughters, Ingrid, Clara, and Gudrun, my parents and my in-laws and all of our families for their unwavering support in allowing us to do what we do. Ruth and the girls were down for the Throne Speech and it was great to have them here in the office and around the building. It throws a little bit of a wrench into the gears with proceedings, but it's a real pleasure to have them here.

From time to time when they're at home, my four-year-old, you know, if the TV is on, will sometimes ask to see the legislature channel as I'm sure members on both sides of the House can relate to when kids are younger and want to see dad or see mom. My four-year-old is interested now and then and will watch it for a little bit, but I have to confess the last time the legislature channel was on, it took about a minute and then Clara said she wanted the channel changed to *Bubble Guppies* in short order. So I won't divulge, Mr. Speaker, which member of the House was speaking when that request came in. But I will say, on the off chance that the girls are watching — I guess it's close to nap time or quiet time — but on the off chance that they are watching now, it's of course fine to change the channel now to something that might be a little more interesting to them at this point in life.

The Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to stand and talk about this government's Throne Speech because in a lot of ways, Mr. Speaker, it's almost as though we didn't have a Throne Speech from this government. And I think a big part of that is simply how vacuous the government's Throne Speech actually was. Now that's definitely a big part of it, that there wasn't a whole lot of meat on the bones, and there weren't a whole lot of bones, to be perfectly frank.

But an even bigger part, I think, in the lack of attention that there has been around the Throne Speech is that it hasn't been the issue or the topic that Saskatchewan people are talking about. Increasingly, Mr. Speaker, what Saskatchewan people are concerned about and talking about are the scandals that we see coming out from this government and from its Premier and from these ministers. And that's what's dominated our discussion, Mr. Speaker, here in the Assembly, and it's what dominates the discussion outside of this Assembly as well.

And we can think of this government's unreal fascination that it has with its lean pet project, that it is spending \$40 million on one US [United States] consultant. It's \$3,500 per day for Japanese senseis that it continues to be determined to fly from Japan to Saskatchewan to go into hospitals. But, Mr. Speaker, as the minister has sort of explained from time to time, the senseis just can't do their job because they don't speak English, so now this government's actually recruiting Japanese translators as well to allow the senseis to do their job, and those translators of course are paid \$600 per day.

And what's fascinating to me and what's puzzling to Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, is this government's

obsession and determination to go down this path with the contract with John Black and Associates in the face, in the face of evidence that continues to build day after day after day.

At first, Mr. Speaker, it was the front-line health care workers that said, you know, I'm not being respected. My opinion isn't being taken into consideration. This isn't helping the work climate, and it's not helping me provide better patient care. And then, Mr. Speaker, we have the facts from the Health Quality Council who said, if you look at the facts of the important indicators like mortality rates, infection rates, patient satisfaction, those are all going in the wrong direction at the same time as we've seen the wholehearted obsession with the lean pet project through JBA [John Black and Associates].

And then, Mr. Speaker, more recently we have actually had criticism from some of the senior administrators within our health system, VPs [vice-president] from the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region giving comments saying that it would actually be an improvement to get out of the JBA contract, saying that the only problem with getting out of the JBA contract would be the concern around optics.

It's unbelievable, Mr. Speaker, that in the face of all that evidence, in the face of what health care workers are saying, senior administrators are saying, the evidence is saying, that they are plowing ahead and continuing to pay that US consultant \$40 million.

So we have the lean scandal and the unhealthy obsession that we have from this government with it. And we've also discussed extensively in this House and throughout the province, and this really has taken the place of discussing a vacuous Throne Speech, is this government's failed smart meter project.

This isn't, Mr. Speaker, simply a business deal gone horribly wrong but it is a situation, as we have seen in question period by pulling the facts out, painful piece by painful piece out of that government, we see that this is an instance of the government knowing that smart meters were dangerous, knowing that there were problems, being warned of those problems. The minister knew about them in briefings. The minister knew that officials were down in Philadelphia looking into problems. But we see them going ahead and putting those dangerous smart meters, smart meters that were physically identical to the meters in Philadelphia, we see them strapping them to the homes of 105,000 Saskatchewan families. That is unbelievable. It's not acceptable.

And for the defence that we have seen from the Premier, the Minister Responsible for SaskPower, the Premier yesterday, Mr. Speaker, when asked why the minister hadn't been forthcoming with the facts, he said, oh well the minister was answering on a go-forward basis, a go-forward basis. So it doesn't . . . therefore meaning it's okay that he withheld information. It's okay he didn't tell us everything he knew. It's okay that he didn't admit to a briefing in 2012 until it was proven that he had had one. It's okay that he didn't talk about a briefing note until it was unearthed that there actually was a briefing note going back to 2012. It's okay because he was looking forward. Mr. Speaker, what an absolutely unacceptable and offensive position for this Premier to take, for this

government to take when what they should be doing is providing proper transparency and the Premier should be ensuring proper accountability to the people of this province by firing the Minister Responsible for SaskPower.

So it's not surprising, Mr. Speaker, that in many ways the Throne Speech really has been mostly a flop because the issues that people care about, the issues that really matter weren't addressed in the Throne Speech, and that is the disconnect that we see from this government and what families in Saskatchewan are actually facing. Increasingly we see actions from this government, Mr. Speaker, that show that it is increasingly working for the select few instead of everyone. And I think this Throne Speech also demonstrates that they're not listening to Saskatchewan people. And on point after point, this Throne Speech really does miss the mark on the things that matter most to Saskatchewan families.

Here are some of the things that I've heard that Saskatchewan people wanted to see in the Throne Speech and people in Saskatchewan are most concerned about. We wanted to see, Mr. Speaker, we wanted to see this government scrap the cash cow contract that it has with the American lean consultant, John Black and Associates, and put those dollars into the front lines of health care. That's what workers want. That's what family advocates like those who joined us in the gallery today want, Mr. Speaker. It's simply the right thing to do. And what is very concerning is that this government had an exit opportunity. This summer they could have exited the John Black contract, but they chose not to. They chose to plow ahead even though they had feedback, scathing feedback from senior health administrators, front-line workers. And we see in internal documents . . . We shouldn't be surprised, Mr. Speaker. We see internal documents that really show this government was just concerned around the optics of exiting from that contract.

What's been very telling also as we looked at the mess around the lean pet project with the American consultant is the fact that the Health minister would actually stand up and say that when JBA, John Black and Associates, leaves the province, well then we can tailor lean to meet Saskatchewan's needs. Why on earth, Mr. Speaker, is this government paying \$40 million, \$40 million to a US consultant who can't even tailor a program for Saskatchewan's needs?

We needed to also see the end of the ridiculous use of Japanese senseis. Senior health administrators have said that they add no value, but we still see government advertising for Japanese interpreters. We see the senseis following people around and organizing supply closets. It's not what is needed to improve health care here in the province. We also wanted to see the end of the \$17 million per year kaizen promotion offices that have been part of this obsession that we have through the JBA contract.

[14:30]

We wanted to see improvements in health care, Mr. Speaker, in wait times including specialist wait times and emergency room wait times because they're nowhere near good enough. ER [emergency room] wait times have doubled since 2010 and that is completely unacceptable.

We also, Mr. Speaker, wanted to see seniors and their families get the attention that they need for better seniors' care in this province. We were reminded of that again today in question period, examples of seniors going weeks at a time without a bath. And the minister will try to say this is a one-off situation but it happens throughout the province with a frequency that is nowhere near acceptable because of the chronic short-staffing that we see throughout. And Carrie Klassen and others have been very strong advocates in calling for a better approach.

Families also wanted to see minimum care standards restored in care homes. This government scrapped those in 2011 and now we have a seniors' care crisis that desperately needs attention.

We need to see, Mr. Speaker, some clear action to reverse the government's trend on bloated administration. A complaint I hear from health care workers time and time again is that this government has no shortage of new positions for more management, more administration, but they always, Mr. Speaker, claim poverty when it comes to ensuring that there are enough people on the front lines to give baths, to clean rooms, to do the important work that brings a quality of care that has dignity, that has respect, and that is indeed safe.

We wanted to see improvements specifically around Saskatoon City Hospital, the rooms, Mr. Speaker, that have had the beds rolled out and had managers' desks rolled in. We wanted to see that end. We wanted to see the beds moved back into City Hospital.

In looking at the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, health care should have been a much bigger priority, but it wasn't. It wasn't because we have had this government's obsession with a program through JBA, through the American consultant, that has proven to be toxic, that has proven to work against better patient care, and is proving to make the US consultant very wealthy, but it's not improving health care for Saskatchewan people.

We also wanted to see new schools, but we want to see those schools, Mr. Speaker, built in the most effective and fastest way. And we want to see schools built that actually meet the needs that communities have, Mr. Speaker. You know, and what we see from this government is plowing ahead with its rent-a-school preference that it has with P3s [public-private partnership].

You know, it's important to have a discussion around P3s with all of the facts on the table. It's important for Saskatchewan people to be able to make an informed decision, to look at the true costs, to look at what benefits there could be, what pitfalls there could be, Mr. Speaker. In that spirit, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition brought forward the P3 accountability and transparency Act, a very pragmatic and common sense piece of legislation that would've gone a tremendous ways in shining some light on the lack of clarity, the lack of details, the lack of information that this government demonstrates with its P3 approach.

The bill called for a complete laying out of the facts with respect to costs, including the cost of credit upfront. It called for an independent watchdog of sorts to ensure everything stays above board. It called for a competitive bidding process. Very

practical things that would have allowed, would have allowed Saskatchewan people to actually have the facts on the table and make a decision about the merit of proceeding down a certain path. But this government, shockingly, Mr. Speaker, voted against a very common sense and practical piece of legislation.

What I wanted to see in this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, was a smarter approach, a more rigorous approach, a better approach when it comes to procurement policy that the government and Crowns have for Saskatchewan businesses so that Saskatchewan businesses, Mr. Speaker, don't have to be in a position where they see trucks rolling into the province with jobs performed in Quebec or Ontario or Texas or California, all at the same time as some in the manufacturing sector for example are looking at giving pink slips to their workers, Mr. Speaker. The government's approach that they've taken has been an incredibly lazy one, simply looking at lowest initial bid as opposed to looking at what the true costs are of projects and making an informed decision that is in the best interest of Saskatchewan taxpayers and Saskatchewan businesses. We want to see a better approach, but it appears government is glued into its lazy approach when it comes to procurement.

We wanted to see, Mr. Speaker, and joining with agricultural producers and producer groups in calling for improvements to the grain transportation system. The government's response to this has been incredibly weak, with a continual approach of patting Gerry Ritz on the back and of cuddling up to the big rail companies. We wanted to see some better action, and there's no indication of that in the Throne Speech.

We wanted to see a comprehensive anti-flooding strategy, which of course is desperately needed throughout our province but especially in certain areas. And we know this is an issue that we will face in the years ahead, and we wanted to see a real strategy.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, we demand an advancement on the unacceptable carbon emissions under this government. There was no discussion of that in the Throne Speech. And just yesterday we had the Environment minister release an Environmental Code with the greenhouse gas emissions chapter completely removed. No mention of it. Completely absent. A huge hole in the code. That's unacceptable. As a resource-producing and a trade-dependent province, Mr. Speaker, it is essential that we are smart and diligent on these types of things, and by leaving that component out of the code, this government demonstrates once again that it is absolutely dropping the ball when it comes to protecting the environment and also protecting our interests here in Saskatchewan.

We laid out specific items we wanted this government to address, and those are the things, Mr. Speaker, as we have travelled the province, as we've spoken with our constituents, that we have heard as their priorities. These are the things, Mr. Speaker, that we've identified, that we've heard from Saskatchewan people that they wanted to see action and movement on.

Make no mistake. We look at the financial means that this government has. They have enough dollars to deliver on that. The government is now spending about \$14 billion each year compared to just about \$8 billion in 2007. This government, if

they had the right focus, if they had the right priorities, could absolutely be delivering on what matters to Saskatchewan families, from health care to highways, Mr. Speaker.

But what we see are priorities in the wrong place. Instead, Mr. Speaker, we see services that families count on, services that families rely on actually getting worse. While the government neglects the basics, while it obsesses and spends lavishly on its toxic and wasteful pet projects, Mr. Speaker, they have a focus that is not placed on the right things, not focused on the things that Saskatchewan families want the most.

And, Mr. Speaker, while this government has developed a taste for spending on its pet projects and also on its entitlements, and we see that in limos to the consultants that it chooses to roll the big cheques out to, far too many families in this province and communities throughout this province are forced to make tougher and tougher decisions when it comes to spending, when it comes to the decisions that they make as a household. We know, Mr. Speaker, that the cost of living is rising for families. So many families have expressed to me, have expressed to us that when they look at their experience as a family over the past years, any advancements that they may have made as families have been outstripped by a rising cost of living.

We hear it in example after example but we see, instead of addressing that in the Throne Speech as they ought to have, we see, Mr. Speaker, a pattern of this government asking families to pay extra, to pay more and more on a variety of fronts. I don't think this government understands the affordability issue and understands the pressures that many families in the province are facing when it comes to cost of living and when it comes to the decisions that they have to make as households.

Here's a telling example of that mindset and that pattern that we see with this government. This government decided to walk away from a fixed-price affordable housing deal in order to help the developer, in order to help the developer to sell those units at a higher rate. The developer came to them, explained that there were problems. Despite a contract in place, Mr. Speaker, despite a contract that this government could have and should have enforced, Mr. Speaker, it just let this developer off the hook. And the explanation given by the minister is that they had a relationship with the developer, Mr. Speaker.

You can understand Saskatchewan people's skepticism and reluctance to just go wholeheartedly down the P3 path with schools, when they can't even enforce a contract, a fixed-price contract on an affordable housing project, Mr. Speaker. But we are supposed to believe that they have it all sorted out for the schools that need to be built here in Saskatchewan.

That decision was bad enough, Mr. Speaker, that decision to help a developer but to hurt the families who needed those affordable housing units, but to add insult to injury, the comments and the remarks coming from that government to me are some of the most shocking aspects of the story. We actually had the minister say, "You're assuming that there's these desperate homeless people." Mr. Speaker, that would not be an acceptable comment coming from any minister of the Crown, any member of the House, let alone, Mr. Speaker, the Minister Responsible for Social Services. And so to me that shows a complete lack of appreciation for the reality that many families

are facing, whether it's the family that's working hard and just managing to make ends meet or whether it's the families, Mr. Speaker, who are falling behind, the families who are struggling and who aren't making it, frankly.

There are seniors, Mr. Speaker, who can't afford the 28 per cent hike in their energy costs. There are families who cannot afford this government's callous advice and to check the yellow pages if their loved one needs home care. There are students, Mr. Speaker, who are desperate for apartments. And yes, Mr. Speaker, there are homeless people in Saskatchewan who are desperate, who need safety. There are homeless people, Mr. Speaker, who have died on the streets. And, Mr. Speaker, this is a reality that needs to be considered and it should not be simply dismissed by any member of this Assembly, let alone the Minister of Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, all families deserve and need to benefit from the good things that are happening in Saskatchewan. Our natural resources, Mr. Speaker, in the province and the hard work of Saskatchewan people have delivered. But I believe that all people, Mr. Speaker, all people in this province, whatever corner they live in, need to benefit from that. The government is not working hard enough in order to ensure that everyone does benefit. Increasingly we see an approach from this government where they are working for the few as opposed to the many. Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that politics cannot simply be about the province doing well, cannot simply be about cranking out self-congratulatory news releases. It must always absolutely be about people doing well. That needs to be the focus, and that is what is lost on this government.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech misses the mark. Mr. Speaker, it misses the mark on what families wanted. It misses the mark in addressing its lean pet project in a way that it needed to be addressed. It misses the mark in addressing the smart meter mess that we see before us, Mr. Speaker. This Throne Speech misses the mark for Saskatchewan families. I believe it is a disappointment for Saskatchewan people. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I have supported the amendment, and I will not be supporting the Throne Speech.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to enter into the debate and participate with respect to the contents of the Throne Speech and maybe even to do a little correcting in terms of what we've just heard.

Mr. Speaker, though, I would like to say that, as many of my colleagues in the legislature have done, that this . . . I will not soon forget this Speech from the Throne. They're all fairly significant days in the life of a legislature and a province, but this one in particular was memorable for all of the wrong reasons, for the tragedy that was unfolding in Ottawa, the terrorist attack that happened there that took the life of one of Canada's finest and the attempts that were made on Parliament Hill, and, Mr. Speaker, I'm already on the record with respect to those events. But I just again want to thank all of those in the Canadian Forces who each and every day are prepared to take the night shift, frankly, on the wall, Mr. Speaker, for all of us, to guard our securities and to guard our freedoms, and also to acknowledge those members of the Canadian Forces that were

here that day and that participate in our Throne Speech ceremonies on a regular basis.

I'm very glad that we made the decision that we would go ahead, that that particular important day in democracy in Saskatchewan needed to proceed. We needed to do so with the company, in the company of those Armed Forces members. We needed to do so in the company of the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] and police officers and members of our judiciary, who are truly the conveyors of the rule of law. I'm glad that we were able to do that and bring forward a Speech from the Throne on that very tragic day.

Mr. Speaker, we've had debates like this before, obviously on an annual basis when governments bring forward the Speech from the Throne, and we all know that, in the past at least, convention has these speeches as being really general in nature, not a lot of information. I remember sitting through a number of those while I was in opposition and hearing some . . . well hearing all of them, at least from 1999 forward, from the government, through to 2007 from the NDP government of the day. And there would be the odd one that would have some specific details as to what the government was planning but mostly they were platitudes.

[14:45]

And, Mr. Speaker, I know that we have erred on the side of detail in all the speeches from the throne that we have done. We have had a lot of specifics that were announced in the Speech from the Throne and we've seen them further developed here even in recent days. In fact, it was the Speech from the Throne that referenced the fact that we were going to go to the public on a consultation on the future of liquor retailing in the province. Mr. Speaker, that announcement happened today, the release of an initial report and then the invitation by the minister responsible for the public to participate occurred.

Mr. Speaker, we are not proposing any further changes now as a government, but we want to hear from Saskatchewan people and we are going to take their advice as we develop our own platform to present to the people before the next election.

We have made one change that's still consistent with the promise we made in the last campaign. In the last campaign, Mr. Speaker, we said we would not sell to private interests liquor stores in Saskatchewan, and we have not. We have kept the promise. We intend to continue to keep that commitment. But what we did say is that because of a growing Saskatchewan, growth that is record breaking in almost every sense, there are new neighbourhoods popping up. There's a demographic demand for new retail outlets, for new stores, and so we've said, rather than take government money and build a liquor store or pay the lease costs of a brand new liquor store, we should rather, Mr. Speaker, put that out to the public and let them apply. Let them make a proposal — the companies, I should say, interested entrepreneurs and companies — and get into the liquor retailing business. And we've seen that unfold very successfully, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, the first company, or in this case co-operative, to actually be successful bidding for a retail store — and I was there; it's a beautiful retail store — was the Saskatoon Co-op.

And so, Mr. Speaker, the irony of course for members of the House here is that of all the members in the legislature, the first owners of a new private liquor store is the member for Saskatoon Centre and the Leader of the Opposition and all the Saskatoon members over there because they're all members of the Co-op. And I remember the ads, growing up: we all own the Co-op.

The NDP members now are in the private liquor business, and I want to congratulate them on that. And I know going forward, should the Regina-based co-operative be successful on a retail basis with respect to a future private store, the Deputy Leader, the member for Rosemont, may well . . . I assume he's a member of the Co-op here in Regina and he will now, he would then be an owner of a private liquor store. And I think that's reasonable. It is 2014 after all. And by the way, we think through his proxy, we do believe that the Co-op is a responsible — a responsible — retailer of liquor.

We have heard a debate in this province around liquor retailing that I hope the NDP can help with. We have seen union leaders — not members; leaders, public sector union leaders — come forward and call out organizations like the Co-op or Sobeys, call them out in terms of whether or not they will be as responsible in selling alcohol as a union member in a government store. I hope the . . . I have not heard the NDP whisper one word about this, by the way.

When they could have stood up for the Co-ops in rural Saskatchewan that have special vendors, when they could have stood up for the franchise owner of Bumper To Bumper in Kyle who's also got a liquor franchise given to him by the New Democrats, when they could have stood up for the Saskatoon Co-op against these public sector union leaders' allegations that somehow now the private sector, the Co-op is going to be irresponsible and sell liquor to minors, there was silence over there. The reason that they were silent then and have a strange intervention today in the wake of the minister's report is because they are so ideologically hidebound on so many issues.

In the Throne Speech we talked about moving this province forward. We talked about the need to innovate, to do things differently, including in health care. We've already used private clinics, for example, to reduce the surgery wait-list.

Maybe we need to have a debate about the role of private diagnostics. They're not interested in that debate. We wanted today to engage them in a debate about how we sell liquor in the province. They don't want to have that debate.

They're ideologically hidebound to this notion, from I don't know what year, that the only way that you can sell alcohol in a major urban centre in Saskatchewan is to have a government store and a unionized staff. By the way, Mr. Speaker, I would point out, I'm not sure if it's RWDSU [Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union] or which union it is, but in the case of the Co-op and I think Sobeys, those are also unionized liquor stores. And in the case of the Co-op, I asked the question about what's being paid there. It's very comparable, frankly, to what was being paid by the government in terms of the stores that are there.

So it's one thing to be ideologically hidebound to issues,

whether it's private clinics shortening the wait-list in a public system or whether it's the private sector being allowed to sell, to retail more liquor in the province. It's quite another to just sit on your hands, to not say a word and stand up and defend those many small mom-and-pop operations that even under the NDP were given a franchise to sell liquor. And now the new organizations like the Co-op and Sobeys and others that will come along who are earnest and who are working to be responsible, Mr. Speaker, I think the NDP said a lot by their silence in this regard. So ideologically hidebound, so tied to union leadership that they simply refuse to stand up for what is right when it is so very clearly right, Mr. Speaker.

So that's just one example of what is in the Throne Speech in terms of a very specific commitment made, already kept by the Minister of SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority], and now we're into a public debate.

There were many other specifics in the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, and they have been well canvassed I think by colleagues on this side of the House. I'm not going to go down the list. I would just say in a general sense that the Speech from the Throne advances the government's agenda in a general way with some specifics that I've referenced that are there and that my colleagues have already spoken to.

And the plan or the agenda of the government has remained unchanged since 2007. And that is, first and foremost our duty is to the economy, first and foremost. Even ahead of social services? One might ask. Even ahead of long-term care issues? One might ask. Even ahead of education or post-secondary issues? One might ask. Our answer is, yes, even ahead of those issues. Because, Mr. Speaker, the only way this province, the only way this province will be able to afford progress for seniors who need long-term care, for the disabled who need the dignity of a residence, for lower tuition fees for students, for better health care, for more highways, the only way to do any of that is to have access to public funds that come from a tax base that must always be broadened, and not necessarily deepened but broadened, in terms of what can be afforded to the government treasury to do these things.

And so it is the prime directive of the Government of Saskatchewan that we would make sure that we were not . . . we were doing no harm to the economy, certainly; that we were not getting in the way of those who create economic wealth, who create the tax base that funds all of the things that they demand every day in question period and frankly that our MLAs do on behalf of their constituents as well, the things that we want on the quality-of-life side of the equation.

So this Speech from the Throne had a specific offering, and we'll have more details on it down the road, of another new-growth tax incentive that will be revenue neutral to the province. This tax relief comes on top of reductions we have made to the small-business tax, historic provincial income tax reductions to the basic exemption and the child tax credit, historic property tax reductions, Mr. Speaker. On top of that what we're saying in this Speech from the Throne is we have to send a message to our exporters here and those that are in other jurisdictions that might want to come to the province that if they do, there might be an incentive tied to each job they create related to exporting products around the world from

Saskatchewan.

I could tell the members of this House that Saskatchewan today, in terms of our provincial counterparts, is the highest per capita trader, exporter of any province in Canada. This is a relatively new development. We've always been pretty effective at exporting, but in the last number of years we've seen almost exponential growth in exports, a lot into Asia but also growth into the United States of America.

We've also seen a diversification in the economy. The Leader of the Opposition, he likes to talk a lot about eggs in baskets. And I think what he means by that is that the government . . . well and the industry, the economy should be diversifying. I think that's what he means by that because he's never actually explained it. He just says it a lot. It's easy in the scrum. And frankly the economy's not the NDP's forte so they're going to cling to any phrase they find, and eggs in baskets happens to be the one.

Well here's the good news, Mr. Speaker. If you take a look at what's happened to our economy since 2007, we have seen a significant diversification. We have seen greater job growth in areas that are export related, in the innovation sector, Mr. Speaker, in financial services than in natural resource, the natural resource sector. In fact the percentage of job growth that we've had, and I think it's 70,000 new jobs since 2007, 70,000 of them, the percentage from the natural resource sector, I'm going to stand to be corrected but it's under 20 per cent, Mr. Speaker. The growth has come in other areas. We need to do more though to diversify.

And that's why, in the Speech from the Throne we said, you know, we're going to provide some incentives for those who are exporters. Agriculture value-add, manufacturers, those on the innovation side that are developing technologies for export might want to take a look at these incentives in terms of their plans for future investments or locationing of new plants, and we'll work hard to promote that, as we have.

It is an indication that the economy though, Mr. Speaker, for us remains the number one priority for our government because it's the only way to pay for the things that we prize. Interesting to see what's happening right now in terms of oil prices. I want to comment on them around the world because my seatmate was very interested in the Throne Speech debate but he's also very interested as the Finance minister in what's going on in terms of the province's revenue.

I want to say that it is a good thing that our economy's diversified because even as we see the cycling of resource prices, we know, and we have seen in the past, the economy continue to move forward. We've seen 2 and 3 per cent GDP [gross domestic product] even at a time when revenues might have fallen because potash sales weren't there or oil sales weren't there.

So I want to offer an encouraging word to Saskatchewan people today that in our province — and we've seen it in spades since 2007 — the treasury's health, the finances of the province in terms of revenue, are quite a different matter than the economy. You can have lower commodity prices and continued growth. That has happened on at least two occasions for a sustained

period of time since 2007.

And for however long we see oil prices down a little bit, we're going to watch the budget carefully. We're going to ensure it continues to be a balanced summary budget, and the auditor wants to see that summary budget, I would say, and the Minister of Finance is nodding his head. We're going to continue to balance it. But the message is, the economy's strong, and we're going to do what we can, including the new-growth incentives, to always be trying to ensure that the economy stays strong, knowing that government doesn't create the jobs but it certainly sets the climate and it should follow a policy of do no harm.

This is significantly different than the policy, the economic policies that used to exist for a very long time in the province, where much harm was done to the economy, where the government insisted, with people's money, with the taxpayers' money — involuntary venture capitalists, I would call them — insisted on picking winners and losers.

Every year the list would be long. The Minister of the Economy has read some of them into the House. And I know the member for Wood River often highlights that list, and I forgot how long the list is. I mean dot-coms and an auction company to compete against eBay and potatoes and all manner of businesses where they took taxpayers' money and they picked winners and losers.

And the bad news, Mr. Speaker, is that when the NDP pick winners and losers, they get it half right. They got a bunch of losers, a long list of them that did two things. One, lost a bunch of taxpayers' money, and did another thing; cast a chill over the economic climate of this province. That's not the kind of environment businesses want, that entrepreneurs want. They want to know they've got a level playing field. They want to know that taxes are competitive. They want to know government's taking care of infrastructure, and then leave me alone and stay out of the economy. That's the change that's happened, and it's represented in the Speech from the Throne as well. Now that's not to say the Throne Speech does not, and the government's plan do not continue to focus in the areas that are very important to us, in health care and education, advanced education, and highways. I just want to touch briefly on it.

It's important that we summarize some of the progress in this area because we hear from members opposite a lot about the record of the government. We found out yesterday that we ought to, we ought to really check the facts. I mean I think we knew that before. The Minister of Health has been busy in sessions recently fact checking the Health critic, Leader of the Opposition's questions that he's been getting because often the premise has little to do with the facts and the truth, the premise of the questions being asked.

We should probably talk about what happened yesterday, again just briefly to make that point because I don't know if I've seen anything like it, where they lead off on smart meters, as we'd expect, with the Leader of the Opposition selectively quoting from the report that of course we commissioned and had released, so there's a pretty good chance we know what's in it, but somehow he leads off and selectively quotes.

[15:00]

And his smoking gun question at that point is, who actually ordered the smart meters to be removed? And, Mr. Speaker, he then read half of a quote from the report that says the board was looking at removing the smart meters. The same quote in the same report that he read, and there is two different occasions where it occurs — in fact three; it's in the executive summary as well — notes that the government ordered the meters to be removed and the board was headed in that direction, but of course the decision of the government was made absent advice from SaskPower officials.

Now as he's went to do, he got that answer, I think, once and twice, but pressed on, Mr. Speaker, because if you don't have the truth on your side, you should just keep asking the questions, apparently.

Later in question period, something more grievous happened. And I have not seen the like of that. I can only imagine what would've happened — I was in opposition — if as a critic I would have done what the member for Nutana, with the blessing of the Leader of the NDP, this new and fresh leader of the NDP, did yesterday. She stood in the House, and I read the quote in question period today. I'm not sure if we have it; oh yes, here it is. Happily I still have it. Mr. Speaker, here is what she said. She said, and I quote, "Mr. Speaker, when I asked in committee for updates on how the smart meter program was working, the answers I received included, 'It's going quite well actually.'"

She's now quoting the answer. "The project is running according to plan." That's the end of that quote. She continues yesterday: "Not once did the minister bother to reveal . . ." and then on she goes. You see what's happened there. Something that's not unparliamentary, but a clear inference on her part, because she's a lawyer and she would know how to word this correctly, a clear implication that it was the minister that said those words. A clear implication that she was actually not . . . that she was asking about whether or not the smart meters were working in their test project.

So, Mr. Speaker, we checked *Hansard*. And of course the viewers will know that everything that's said in this Assembly when it's in session, including at the committee level, is recorded, and thank goodness with this bunch over there, Mr. Speaker. Here's the fact of the matter. She did ask questions in committee about smart meters on the day she was referencing. She asked questions. Here, well let's just . . . Here it is. Here's the question from the same member. She's asking specifically about budget. "Is it on budget or has there been extra costs involved with that as well?" That's her question.

She's not asking about whether the meters work or how the test worked. That was her implication yesterday though. She was asking if it was on budget, a perfectly reasonable question. A perfectly reasonable question, but one that she would ought to remember, especially if she's going to change the question then or her recollection of it in the House on her feet on the record. So she wasn't asking at all about whether the pilot was working on terms of the technology. She was saying is it on budget. And what's worse, Mr. Speaker, is the quote she read yesterday with the clear inference, and she knows this, that it was the minister that said the reply, which is here now that "It's going quite well actually" was Robert Watson, not the minister.

Now usually when the NDP . . . well, not always, but sometimes when the NDP do something like that in question period, they run out and they provide the paper for it to the media. I did think it passing strange yesterday that it didn't happen, and now we know why. We know why. It is exactly the kind of tactic we saw from Mr. Lingenfelter.

I remember the day when I actually heard the ad they put together. They would come and monitor our scrums. Mr. Lingenfelter's people and Mr. Broten was involved and developed . . . Oh sorry. The NDP leader was involved in developing their campaign plan. So was the Deputy Leader. So was the member for Regina Lakeview sanctioning — I think the member for Nutana as well — sanctioning this tactic. They would monitor a scrum. They would take the tape away from something that I had said. They'd splice words together to make me say something I . . . And by the way, I can get in enough trouble on my own. But they spliced my words together to make something that, to make me say in an ad that I never did say.

And they paid for that because they got caught and people said, have your debates in there. Ask your questions in there. That's what it's for. But do it in a manner that is respectful. Do it in a manner that is truthful. Mr. Speaker, that's what the people of Saskatchewan would have us do. And I think some of us thought well, with Mr. Lingenfelter gone, that's going to change. Wrong. Wrong. It's the same old NDP.

This new leader practises the same tactics as Mr. Lingenfelter when it comes to playing games in this legislature. I hope . . . I know that that honourable member from Nutana is an honourable member. And while there was no unparliamentary infraction here because the wording she made was very careful, I know her to be a good person. And I hope that she would at least consider a private note to the minister: let's just apologize. You know, we went pretty far there; that was not the right thing to do. That's not who I am, and I shouldn't perhaps have listened to the Deputy Leader or the Leader and got up at the end of question period and done something like that.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne also references education, that we are going to continue to build schools in the province, that we are going to continue with the P3 model. I think it's fair to say that our government will not continue with the P3 model out of, for any ideological reasons. If we cannot get the number of applicants we need, the number of responses to the request for proposal that ensures the costs will be lower, we're not going to go ahead. We'll build it the conventional way.

Again, compare that to the NDP who are just ideologically opposed to innovative ways to fund capital. And, Mr. Speaker, I would just say this: the NDP have said, well we're going to do it the way that it's always been done in the province, and never mind what's happening around the world or the rest of the country. I'll tell you what, those communities that want schools — including the leader's constituency, of the NDP, Massey Place — under the NDP, would never get a school because the money simply couldn't be assembled to build them as fast as we need them because of rapid growth. So if we can get multiple proponents, if we can ensure the cost is lower, we're going to go ahead.

And, Mr. Speaker, the good news on P3s is we've been seeing some hope around the Sask Hospital and the corrections facilitators, some early indications that we can do this more cost effectively than otherwise. And we saw it front and centre in Swift Current for the new long-term care facility there, where costs are going to come in \$16 million less than had we gone the NDP route to build it. We're going to get, actually get the project done and open 225 new beds, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say that in education, we're going to continue to invest in capital, and we're going to continue to support the operating budget of our school boards. In advanced education, the record of the government stands, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's fair, it bears repeating. We talk about the adult basic education list in the Speech from the Throne and eliminating it. There's more resources there. And people ought to take comfort that we actually do the things we say we would do in advanced education. Because at the University of Regina, their operating funding under our government is up 40 per cent, and at the University of Saskatchewan, their operating funding under our government is up 65 per cent.

And capital funding in this province is way up. They can take us at our word when we talk about the investment that's needed in the post-secondary sector. One thousand eleven hundred and seventy-eight new student residences in the province, project at the University of Regina. Mr. Speaker, that is a 2,354 per cent increase which says two things: (1) that we're building a lot of student residences; and (2) they didn't build any. They didn't build any. I mean we had pressures even before the growth happened at our campuses. Nothing from the NDP again. Lots of talk, lots of requests. But, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to support that.

Highways. We talked in the Speech from the Throne about infrastructure in general. I want to say for the record I travelled a lot this summer, first to go to communities affected by the flood. We are mindful of them in the legislature in this session and in the budgeting process. And thank goodness we have a rainy day fund, and thank goodness we've made improvements to the disaster assistance program, arguably with more needed. And thank goodness we're responding as quickly as we can to those needs. But we travelled the province in the case of the touring around for the floods.

And then just generally as we would go around the province, for example we would meet in communities, and sometimes it would be a political event that we would actually be going to, a picnic. We held them all around the province. And I noted that they were successful and the NDP actually started doing some picnics.

The difference by the way with their picnics is that I remember one particular invitation from Erin Weir who had ran for the leadership. He wanted to host a picnic in Regina just like our picnics. And I think the invitation went something like, look, come to the picnic but bring your own food. And we don't have any chairs or anything, and if you could bring some toys for the kids to play with. And oh by the way, we're going to have to rent the park, so could you bring some money to help pay for that. It's an interesting picnic.

But, Mr. Speaker, as we travelled the province, wherever we

were, we heard, I heard about highways. There is an understanding, colleagues, out there, as you know, that we have invested historically in highways. They know, without maybe getting into the specific numbers, that it's about \$655 million this year, and a record. And it broke the record that was set last year, which broke the record that was set the year before that, which broke the record that was set the year before that — successive historic investments in highways.

And yet still because of the amount of thin membrane surfaces, because of the amount of projects out there — and, I must say, because of an infrastructure deficit left behind by our friends — we have much more work to do. And more than that, we need to make sure we're doing it as effectively as possible.

And so we've asked the Minister of Highways, and she's working carefully with the Legislative Secretary, who I want to thank on the record today, travelling across this province, meeting with our MLAs and reeves and mayors and businesses and looking at more thin membrane surface than perhaps even anyone in the Ministry of Highways has done, the officials. The member for Cut Knife-Turtleford, I want to thank him for that work.

Now we've got to do something with that work. We've got to find out how we can do better in terms of highways investment. The good news, Mr. Speaker, is it is not those folks on the other side that are in power. Again if people are looking for hope that maybe we'd keep this commitment to continue to invest in highways and do a little better and find ways to innovate and make the pavement go a little farther, they should take comfort in the record that we've had in terms of those investments and budgets.

And they should be grateful that the other guys aren't in power because not only did they not do a lot when they were in power but the Leader of the Opposition was just on his feet talking about his 25 points that he wanted to see in the Speech from the Throne. This was his test, these 25 things needed to be addressed by the government, either in the Speech from the Throne or in the session that ensues. Guess what was missing? Not a word about highways.

I hear the leader say he's travelling around the province. But I wonder if he is because if he is travelling the province, first thing he will hear in rural Saskatchewan, they have other concerns, but the first thing he will hear are highways — this particular TMS [thin membrane surface], that particular road. What are you doing on rural roads? How are you helping SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities]? He'll hear it if he's doing it, if they're meeting with rural Saskatchewan, frankly, and people in the cities as well. How do you come out with your 25 things you demand from the government in the Speech from the Throne and forget highways?

We ought not to be surprised. There are nine of them sitting over there because, Mr. Speaker, they spent years forgetting about rural Saskatchewan. They spent years ignoring ... [inaudible].

And so we know we have work to do. You know, right now there's a by-election going on in Lloydminster. Here's an

example of an investment turnaround. The Minister of Highways tells me that since 2007 the amount the government, our government has invested in highways in the Lloydminster constituency is up 853 per cent, which again means that we're investing. And arguably we need to do more, and they really didn't do much of anything at all.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech debate affords us the opportunity to hear both sides spell out what their vision is for Saskatchewan, what plans they have to fulfill that vision. And I heard the NDP suggest a few things in their 25-point thing, and I give them credit for that. But, Mr. Speaker, we could well be one year away from an election, from a general election in the province.

Here's how that could work. We all know that the election, right now as it stands, is set for April of 2016. But that's predicated on the fact that our original set date in November of 2015 had to be moved because the federal election will occur on that same time. We contacted the Prime Minister, who indicated they were going to continue with their set date, and so provinces in Canada have moved theirs. But it could be, it's happened in the past, the federal government chooses to go sooner. They may choose to call an election for Canadians sooner than that. If it happens, we're going to be right back at the original date set in law, the first Monday in November 2015.

That's not very long from now. It's not very long from now in terms of having to work very hard in the months ahead and in the 28 days for all of us to again try to earn the trust of Saskatchewan people, to try to present them with the record of our government, highlight what we think's worked and also the things that we need to do a little better on, but present those specific things like we did in the Speech from the Throne, and in the context of a vision for Saskatchewan. We need to do that, Mr. Speaker.

[15:15]

But I would argue, so do they. They have a new leader of their party after the Lingenfelter years, and we would understand that he would take some time to simply be an opposition leader, hold the government accountable. That's part of the role.

But as you get closer to an election — we did this, by the way, prior to 2007 — you need to be able to offer more than complaints. You must offer more than criticism. You must offer more than the demand for more expenditure. You must offer also how you would pay for the expenditure.

And I believe, and it's good for us on this side, I think these folks have missed an amazing opportunity, even in the Speech from the Throne debate, to start to do that. Because I don't think — given the track record of the NDP in education, health care, highways, and the economy — I don't think the people of the province are just prepared to accept from them, trust us. We'll do better than the other guys. The track record's not there, Mr. Speaker. In fact the record would speak to something else entirely.

I want to just conclude, if I can, by referencing the theme of the Speech from the Throne, which was "Keeping Saskatchewan Strong." And the Throne Speech lays out what we mean by that,

but I just want to share an email, if I can. It's a long one, so bear with me, Mr. Speaker, as I read it into the record. It says, and I quote:

Mr. Wall, I need to tell you a story that happened to my son just a week ago and how it has changed his view of Saskatchewan. Here's what happened. My son's name is Dylan Stanley.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, I emailed the writer and asked if I could please use it in the House and so I do that now.

Here's what happened. My son's name is Dylan Stanley. He lives in Regina and he is dating a very nice lady, Carley Nemeth. Dylan was working out of town when on Friday, October 10, Carley called him to state that her grandfather had passed away of a heart attack while doing his harvest at Semans, Saskatchewan.

Upon hearing this, Dylan returned home, changed, and headed to the farm to assist with the harvest and helping out Carley's grandma and uncle. Dylan is only 18. He was excited to help. When I spoke to him, I asked if they needed help. Dylan said, Dad, it's amazing to see all the help here. There are five combines, two semis, four grain carts, and a mess of people, local farmers and the staff from the Case store who took the time to come out and help with the harvest, the whole community helping. Farmers and families and friends taking the time to miss Thanksgiving to help get the fields done. The harvest was completed on Wednesday, October 15th, by all of the people that came to help this family.

They're going to say goodbye to Robert Hillis on Thursday, October 16th, in Semans.

I just wanted to tell you about these heroes in our province. And to the heroes that helped get this done, this is what being a true Saskatchewan [Saskatchewanian, I think he means] is all about.

My son is proud to be a part of this, as I am, sending you this message of when in need, we come together as family and work hard to get harvest done. I too am very proud to be from Saskatchewan.

I don't know if they're watching today, but these folks probably deserve a hand from all members in the House for that.

[Applause]

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Some people might think when a Saskatchewan Party or sort of the free-enterprise-oriented party talks about keeping Saskatchewan strong, that we would mean the economy. And while it's the prime directive, while it's a top priority and important, it's never what we meant. When we talk about keeping Saskatchewan strong, when we talk about the strength of Saskatchewan, we've always been talking about people like Dylan, the people of Saskatchewan.

That's why on the last page of the Speech from the Throne it says:

Saskatchewan is strong.

This strength comes from our people — their hard work, their determination, their ingenuity and their generosity.

We owe those people the best possible government we can provide. Not perfect, but the very best possible government that we could provide. That we would offer an economic vision and then a plan to help it achieve its potential and then to invest in these things that I've talked about today. That is what we need to be mindful of. Notwithstanding what comes from over there, colleagues. Notwithstanding, Mr. Speaker, what we hear in terms of the partisan back and forth. This side of the House will remember that our duty is to those people, to those farmers, to people in the cities who desire for their province the very best and want from their government its very best.

Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are going to work hard to give them every single day. We have the honour to try and that's why I support the Speech from the Throne.

The Speaker: — The motion before the House for an address to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor moved by the member for Saskatoon Eastview, seconded by the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow:

That an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To Her Honour the Honourable Vaughn Solomon Schofield, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Will the Assembly take the question as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — All those in favour say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — All those opposed say nay.

Some Hon. Members: — Nay.

The Speaker: — The ayes have it. Call in the members.

[The division bells rang from 15:20 until 15:26.]

The Speaker: — All those in favour please rise.

[Yeas — 41]

Wall	Morgan	Duncan
Krawetz	Boyd	Eagles
McMorris	Reiter	Harpauer
Toth	Huyghebaert	Doherty
Moe	Docherty	Campeau
Heppner	Cheveldayoff	Harrison
Tell	Ottenbreit	Norris
Hart	Kirsch	Bjornerud
Brkich	Makowsky	Weekes
Cox	Draude	Wilson
Marchuk	Bradshaw	Michelson
Hutchinson	Merriman	Jurgens
Steinley	Lawrence	Tochor
Phillips	Doke	

The Speaker: — All those opposed please rise.

[Nays — 9]

Brotten	Forbes	Wotherspoon
Vermette	Belanger	Chartier
McCall	Nilson	Sproule

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the humble address, 41; those opposed, 9.

The Speaker: — The ayes have it. Carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

**Bill No. 148 — *The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, 2014*
*Loi de 2014 modifiant la Loi de 2009 sur les services de l'état civil***

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading for *The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, 2014*. Mr. Speaker, this amendment will modernize vital statistics but will continue to maintain the principles of the original legislation. The vital statistics registry is responsible for registering and maintaining vital event information, therefore we must ensure that the way information is collected, recorded, and used is appropriate for this day and age.

First we recognize that today's world is different from 2009 when the initial vital statistics Act was first introduced. What used to be done by paper can be done now electronically. We can use technology to streamline processes for customers and to ensure efficient operation of the vital statistics registry.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments will address gaps and create efficiencies by making it easier for people to receive timely access to vital events documents. While developing the amendments of *The Vital Statistics Act, 2009*, consultations were undertaken with, to name a few, The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan, the nurse practitioners of Saskatchewan, and the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association.

[15:30]

Proposed amendments to the current Act include: enabling nurse practitioners to sign medical certificates of death and stillborn, and enabling the potential future addition of prescribed practitioners to also perform this function, enabling the minister to disclose vital statistics information in unique circumstances not provided for in the legislation, providing vital statistics customers with the option of submitting birth, death, stillbirth, and marriage statements electronically, and addressing some housekeeping amendments.

Under the current legislation, only a physician can sign a medical certificate of death, Mr. Speaker. This poses a challenge for many rural and northern communities where there may be no local physician. This results in delays for families wanting to bury their loved ones as they wait for a physician to travel to their communities or where they must transport the deceased to a physician for an examination. Enabling nurse practitioners to sign the medical certificate of death will provide options when a physician is not available as pronouncement of death is already within their scope of practice.

Mr. Speaker, in the current legislation there's no ability for the government to provide vital statistics information in unique circumstances. For example, the missing children's project of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada requested death information for Aboriginal children who attended residential schools in Saskatchewan. But, Mr. Speaker, under the current legislation we are unable to provide information after the year 1945.

The addition of a discretionary clause would allow the minister to act in such circumstances without requiring permanent legislative changes. Paper submission of statements of birth, death, stillbirth, and marriage are the current norm. Paper used to be the way records were kept. But, Mr. Speaker, providing customers with the option of submitting electronically will result in efficiencies for vital statistics customers and providers, but also allowing those who prefer to submit by paper.

The new legislation facilitates the use of technology to make the process more efficient. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of *The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, 2014*.

The Speaker: — It has been moved, second reading has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 148, *The Vital Statistics Amendment Act*, be now read the second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to stand in my place today to offer the official opposition's initial comments on Bill 148, *The Vital Statistics Amendment Act*.

And, Mr. Speaker, this bill is of course a very important bill. And I noticed there was reference made to rural Saskatchewan and northern Saskatchewan in terms of trying to ensure that there is an efficient and more modern way to record deaths, births, and of course stillbirths, and to allow certain practitioners such as nurse practitioners the ability to sign certain documents.

And, Mr. Speaker, certainly there is that added aspect to the bill. And what we want to do in the Assembly, of course, is look through these bills very carefully and be sure as to the intent. Certainly from our perspective as the opposition, we think that there has to be adjustments made as a result of the function of *The Vital Statistics Amendment Act* to ensure that there is some efficiencies.

And absolutely we agree to a large extent that in the electronic age, that when one looks at the information around texting, around cellphone use, and certainly the email opportunity and options that are out there now, that sometimes it's probably more efficient and effective if we were to simply allow the electronic age to become used by many people, including government, to ensure that there are some efficiencies, and certainly point out that the cost-effectiveness are some of the things that we need to look at when we look at this particular bill.

So there is advantages to northern Saskatchewan. There are advantages to rural Saskatchewan where distance is a problem. And, Mr. Speaker, I understand there may be electronic signatures allowed for a nurse practitioner to be able to sign the documentation as indicated by the minister. These are something that we think overall, in terms of efficiency of the service itself, are probably things that do merit our support. But as always, as we indicate at the outset of all these bills, it's important to look at the bill very carefully, the wording, the changes that are necessary. And the opposition will certainly do that.

And as always, as we get up and speak about the second reading speeches and our initial first look at the bill, Mr. Speaker, is this is the first time that the opposition, the first opportunity that the opposition gets detailed notes as to the changes imposed in some of these bills. So certainly from our perspective, this is first-time information. We want to look through the bill itself to make sure some of the initial comments made by the minister is exactly what the bill intends to do, and this is our role, of course, as the official opposition.

Now, Mr. Speaker, quickly if I can summarize what the minister spoke about to the folks that are listening that may have some interest in this. And it's an amazing thing, Mr. Speaker, that it's sometimes unusual to expect information and guidance and advice from some of the most strange sources, but a lot of organizations and people sometimes take an interest in some of these bills. And what we would do is of course encourage that, because they may have a perspective that we aren't aware of, and not only in government but certainly in the opposition benches as well. So we would encourage those organizations, those people who have an interest in these particular bills to participate, to contact the opposition, and we'll certainly incorporate some of their concerns. It is a standard process that we undertake with all the bills and it's not going to be different with Bill No. 148.

Now, Mr. Speaker, quickly to summarize, the bill makes it easier to submit birth and death certificates, for example, by using electronic signatures, as I indicated. It's important to modernize with society's increasing use of electronic documents and transactions, but as always we have to be very careful to ensure that these important events are tracked

properly because as you and I know, Mr. Speaker, a lot of times we count on technology, and technology's a very valuable tool, but there could be glitches. There could be setbacks. There could be problems and that's why it's important to anticipate these problems at the outset because it'll obviously build a better system. And this is the purpose of us as an opposition vetting this bill through a number of organizations and certainly asking a number of people for their valuable and valued advice on some of these bills.

There's no question, Mr. Speaker, in my circumstance and certainly my current home in Ile-a-la-Crosse, that I have a lot of experience when it comes to northern Saskatchewan and some of the challenges we have. And, Mr. Speaker, we look at the issue of the health care challenges in the North, in particular the Far North, and many times electronic opportunities that may not exist in Black Lake or Stony Rapids or Patuanak that hinders and certainly doesn't help the administration of health services. We have very well qualified doctors and nurses and lab techs and support staff that provide health services but it's also what you'd call the administrative or clerical staff that have to undertake a lot of the . . . share the information and undertake a lot of the administrative duties and recording and collecting data of the health system that they operate under. And if it's easier for them to use a particular means such as email, then by all means we want to be able to support that particular effort.

Mr. Speaker, the bill also allows other people other than doctors to be able to sign death certificates. So I know in many circumstances a more efficient use of technology, allowing other people to sign documents that where a doctor's not readily available and of course to administer the costs of health care in the most efficient way, these are some of the common themes and certainly some of the common practices and understandings that we in the NDP opposition would want to support.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that again as I mentioned, it's important to make the system more efficient. But as I sit back and look at some of the challenges with the health care system in northern Saskatchewan, efficiency's one thing but if you don't do the reoccurring work in ensuring that we have the proper complement of doctors and nurses and services, including lab techs and so on and so forth, that northern Saskatchewan will continue to suffer a second-rate health service and system.

So I think it's important that yes, while on one hand we support the administrative improvements that are designed under this particular bill, Bill 148, to allow the vital statistics and information attached to *The Statistics Act* to be able to be efficiently shared and efficiently, I guess, signed and certainly efficiently entered is always an improvement, it's a small improvement to the system but we mustn't use this as the only solution up in the North by making the administration more efficient. But you've got to make sure the proper complement of doctors and the proper complement of nurses, lab techs, and the list goes on as to the many professional people that help deliver health care throughout the province of Saskatchewan.

So for rural and remote communities, rural and remote communities and northern communities, they continue to pressure the government to recruit and to retain these doctors which they're really important. And while small steps of this

magnitude, small steps of this sort under Bill 148 pale in comparison to the magnitude of effort that must be undertaken to continue to keep our doctors and to attract more. And I want to make sure, I want to make sure that that message is heard loud and clear by the provincial government and certainly by the minister.

So the only thing that we find also very interesting in this particular bill, Bill No. 148, Mr. Speaker, we don't have any major concerns at the outset in terms of who can sign the birth certificates or who can sign the stillbirth documentation. We don't have any problems with nurse practitioners being able to sign some of the documents as well. We don't have a problem being able to use electronic signatures. But one of the most interesting parts of this bill, and something that we're going to pay an especially close watch over in this particular bill, is the section in there where cabinet can now approve the disclosure of private information to third parties.

And I want to reiterate that again and re-emphasize that, that one part of the bill is that cabinet can now approve the disclosure of private information to third parties. And that's a very powerful and very important change that we notice in this particular bill, and I wonder exactly who called for that particular change. And as the minister alluded to, he spoke about the residential school matters, and of course that tugs at the hearts of many people. But the question that we have is, who else would have access to that particular information?

So a lot of people out there that don't want their private health information shared with anyone, now what this bill does is it allows the opportunity for certain organizations and groups to have access to your private health care information. And, Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that the minister was pulling on the heartstrings of many people when he mentioned the residential school issues, the question we have is, okay, in that instance perhaps it's justified. But there are many other instances that people may not feel it's justified to release their private health information to an organization or a group.

Now does this allow the government from time to time to share information with, for example, John Black, their \$40 million American-based consultant? Are there other groups and other organizations that would have access if they approached cabinet to have access to that vital information on patients' history, Mr. Speaker?

So this is something that we have to make absolutely certain that this is not something that's going to be abused. And this is the reason why, Mr. Speaker, we pay very close attention to some of the bills, no matter how inconsequential that they appear, that we take the time to study it, to research with different groups that are impacted by it, and certainly try and find out more information from the government as to what their intent is.

So again the point that I would raise on this particular bill is a point that this opposition's going to spend a lot of time. Who exactly requested the disclosure of private information to third parties, and why did they do that? The minister gave us one example, but, Mr. Speaker, we're sure there'll be other examples and other justifications for sharing information, people's private health information. And one example that

comes totally and quickly to my mind is the lean consultant from the States. Do they now have access to information?

Now the other thing that's important, Mr. Speaker, is that I look at the bill itself and the time frame of this bill. Now has any information been shared from this day and the past days that the government has already given this information out? Has John Black and Associates out of the American-based consultant, have they got any information, Mr. Speaker, from this government? And now after the fact they're proposing this bill.

[15:45]

These are some of the things that we want to find out. And if they have been doing this, Mr. Speaker, have they been sharing information before this bill has been presented into the Assembly, then they have been sharing that information illegally and without legislative authority, Mr. Speaker.

Now what I'm trying to figure out here today, Mr. Speaker, for what purpose, for what purpose is the minister now requesting cabinet approval from time to time to share and to approve the disclosure of private-held information of the Saskatchewan residents, the Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker? And that is a very worrisome issue right there. And that's why, and that's why, Mr. Speaker, when people find their medical records found in the dumpsters throughout our cities, Mr. Speaker, that's not careful consideration of people's private health care information.

And now if this government is treating, treating the care and protection of medical records to a point where they're allowing companies to throw these into a trash can where everybody could read them, then they come back to us several months later saying, we want to disclose more information of people's private health information, then we in the opposition are saying, hold it. There is something that may be problematic with this bill, so therefore we're going to take the time and find out exactly what the purpose of this is.

And I sure hope, Mr. Speaker, I sure hope that the minister is forthcoming, that we don't have to FOI [freedom of information] this information as to who asked for this change. And what circumstances, what other circumstances will this government allow certain companies or organizations or groups access to people's medical records here in the province of Saskatchewan? That is a very worrisome aspect of this particular bill, and we're going to spend a lot of time, a lot of time researching that particular note that the minister certainly glossed over and didn't speak very long about.

But it's one of the glaring, glaring examples of why in opposition it's important that we reach out to organizations. It's important that we pay attention to bills of this sort. And it's important that we allow every member of this opposition and our team, our network of people out there, give them access to this bill and say, look, what do you see and what do you foresee as some of the dangers that the people of Saskatchewan ought to be aware of when it comes to bills of this sort.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is *The Vital Statistics Amendment Act*. It's something that we are going to pay a very, very . . . we're going to pay a lot of attention to. It's a very, very important bill, Bill

148. And you look at the history of how the vital statistics branch was together with the information or land titles branch to form the Information Services Corporation and, Mr. Speaker, they sold that. They sold one of the Crowns that was making money.

And they also said, we're going to hive off *The Vital Statistics Act* because we don't want people having private information. And they really, quite frankly, justified their privatization of ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan] by saying people's private health information and all the statistics we have throughout the province of our people, well we'll keep that within government control.

And then all of a sudden this bill comes along, this bill comes along and says, well on occasion we might share information with different organizations and different groups. And, Mr. Speaker, this is exactly why it's important that the opposition track down what the intent of this government is, take the time to focus on the issues that are being identified in this particular bill, and every one of the opposition members and the people out there that are concerned about this will be advised of this.

And, Mr. Speaker, we will certainly express our disappointment. We will certainly express our position on things that we can agree with. But, Mr. Speaker, we'll certainly highlight the dangers of certain bills that threaten the privacy of Saskatchewan residents.

And Bill 148 is a prime example of how we have grown to mistrust this government, not only when they sold a Crown from underneath us, but they went on to, at great lengths, to say we'll protect private information and then a few months later they come along with a bill like this saying, we're going to share people's information, held information, from time to time. And this, Mr. Speaker, from my point certainly speaks of the mistrust we have of the government and I'm sure the mistrust the people of Saskatchewan will come to share when it comes to see how this government has been handling private information since they have been in power.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot more to say on this. We have a lot more to say. We're inviting any teams out there that'll be concerned about this. We're asking the lawyers that may have some issues with this. We're asking the medical professions out there to participate in this. And again as you look at the face of it, Mr. Speaker, we do not for one second trust anything that that particular government does when it comes to the protection of our Crowns or protection of people's private information. They have failed miserably on both counts, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we're going to take the time to study this bill.

And they try and disguise it as convenient. We say, if it's a matter of convenience and efficiency of the administration of health care, we support it. But if you're trying to slip something through the process of the legislative agenda by putting in sections like this, we're going to catch it. We're going to speak about it, and we're going to tell the people of Saskatchewan about it. And we hope to involve as many organizations and groups that should be concerned about this, that would be concerned about it, and we'll certainly hear from them in the future, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm putting the minister and I'm certainly putting the government on notice that this particular bill is going to take a lot of our time and attention and research. And if we find any evidence that they're willing to share information with some of their consultants like Mr. Black, Mr. Speaker, we're going to advise the public accordingly. And, Mr. Speaker, if there is any indication on how they've protected people's private information by throwing them in dumpsters in back alleys, then once again people of Saskatchewan will see how disappointed they'll become with this government when it comes to bills of this sort.

So we will be very vigilant to ensure people of Saskatchewan know the true nature of how the Saskatchewan Party government has failed on many fronts, and yet they try and gloss over and try and move bills along to the Assembly with little debate and little scrutiny, and we're going to put a wrench in that particular plan, Mr. Speaker. So on that note, we have a lot more to say. I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 148, *An Act to amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 148. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 149 — *The Health Administration Amendment Act, 2014*

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of *The Health Administration Amendment Act, 2014*, formerly *The Department of Health Act*. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you and I are among the approximately 1.1 million people who hold Saskatchewan health cards. And your renewal stickers are in the mail, if you haven't received it. Make sure you put it on your card when you do receive it.

Those cards represent our eligibility for health benefits in Saskatchewan, as we are part of the health registration program. Earlier this year, the program functions and staff of the health registration program transferred out of the Ministry of Health over to eHealth Saskatchewan.

When health registration was previously a branch within the Ministry of Health, the program worked closely with eHealth to provide support for the electronic system that runs the application, the online application and renewal process for health cards. The move to eHealth was a natural progression. eHealth is well suited to incorporate health registrations because of its robust privacy and security safeguards for personal health information. The function of health registration also aligns well with the recent transfer of vital statistics to eHealth.

To allow for a full transfer of health registration functions to eHealth Saskatchewan, it's necessary to amend *The Health Administration Act*. The current provisions of *The Health Administration Act* assign the role of registering beneficiaries to

the Minister of Health and the ministry operating the program. Since the health registration program is now being operated by eHealth, this needs to be updated. There is a need to amend section 6.5 of the Act which currently refers to the powers of the minister to register beneficiaries. The amendment will enable the minister to designate a Crown corporation or an agency of the Government of Saskatchewan to exercise the powers and perform the functions of the minister.

Mr. Speaker, eHealth Saskatchewan is helping us to modernize the way health services are delivered in the province, and that will benefit patients across the province. For this reason I am pleased to bring this legislation to the House today. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of *The Health Administration Amendment Act, 2014*. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Health has moved that Bill No. 149, *The Health Administration Amendment Act, 2014* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I said at the outset, I'm once again pleased on behalf of the official opposition to offer our initial comments on Bill 149.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we see here is evidence once again of how a government in their haste to privatize Information Services Corporation didn't take care of the necessary steps nor to amend the legislative Act to ensure that their agenda to privatize Information Services Corporation was done properly. So what we see, Mr. Speaker, is now they're catching up. It's only been maybe a year and a half, two years since they've embarked on this process to privatize ISC, and now they've got to do all this other work to make sure that what they said at the start . . . that they'd do their very best to protect the information of the people of Saskatchewan, their health information.

Well the phrase the minister used, Mr. Speaker, was robust privacy. Now, Mr. Speaker, we would hope that a dumpster full of people's private health information isn't what the minister was speaking about when he spoke about robust privacy because, Mr. Speaker, that's certainly not something that the people of Saskatchewan would expect from the phrase robust privacy. And, Mr. Speaker, that's what happening. That's the common practice we see from the Saskatchewan Party government, Mr. Speaker.

So it's obvious at the outset that the government didn't do their homework in their haste to privatize Information Services Corporation. And now what we're seeing, Mr. Speaker, now they're catching up. They're being probably told, you've got to do this kind of change in your Acts to ensure that all the information from vital statistics is able to be transferred over to eHealth but yes, you can still continue to sell off Information Services Corporation, a corporation that profited \$14 million and counting each year to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Now we want to make sure of one thing in terms of any bills that we see. The eligibility of benefits must be well defined. People have to know what they're being covered for, Mr. Speaker. And it really is important I think in the administration of good health that people that have these particular needs,

people that have contributed to the economy, to the income tax base, and to the province overall, that in their time of need when it comes to health care, that the health care system is there for them because many times they contributed time and time again through a variety of sources — whether it's a donation, whether it's volunteer work, or whether it's paying your taxes — that over time many of our elders, as a good example, the seniors, and some families impact it as well. When they do need the health care system, that it's there for them, and the process is as efficient as possible, Mr. Speaker. And that's the whole message that we have on behalf of the opposition is that we want to ensure that privacy, administratively privacy's protected and administratively that we're very efficient to ensure that people out in Saskatchewanland are being served well when it comes to their health needs.

We're hearing many, many examples. In particular my colleague from Saskatoon Riversdale has spoken of how senior citizens are waiting three weeks without a bath, Mr. Speaker. And then yet you see some of the examples of how the government tries to dress up their bills, talking about robust privacy, talking about how an agency and Crown corporation can now be empowered by a minister. And you look at the MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] debate, Mr. Speaker.

There's just tons of examples of how, when we talk about health care and the efficiencies of health care, of how the NDP have it right, Mr. Speaker. Administratively you want to make sure you have as an efficient system as possible, Mr. Speaker, so that you can concentrate all your resources, the financial resources that you have, on making sure that you have good doctors in place, making sure you have good nursing staff in place, making sure you have good lab techs in place, and of course all the other support staff that form our front line and our overall health services worker group, Mr. Speaker.

So I think it's important that people out there know that some of these bills that we see is a result of the Sask Party's poor planning, poor thinking, and their intent to start privatizing some of the Crown corporations. And what this bill impacts, people may ask. It impacts a corporation called Information Services Corporation. That Information Services Corporation had both the vital statistics branch and the lands branch incorporated into one Crown corporation. Well, Mr. Speaker, what the Sask Party's done is they separated them, and they sold off the land titles branch. And, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan didn't want that.

[16:00]

Now a couple of years later, now they're coming along saying, well we have to make all these amendments to protect *The Vital Statistics Act*. And, Mr. Speaker, we on this side say, yes of course we should protect the private information. But now this bill and the bill before that indicates that they can, from time to time based on cabinet information, they can share some of that information. And, Mr. Speaker, when the minister talks about robust privacy, a full dumpster full of people's private health information does not to me constitute the phrase robust privacy.

So I think once again we want to pay attention to this. This is all about catch-up legislation. I know that this particular Minister of Health is fixing up a lot of mistakes from his predecessor.

He's made mistakes on his own, but he continues doing a lot of catch-up on the legislation and the errors made from his predecessor. And he continues making a number of errors on his part, Mr. Speaker. So we want to make sure anything that the Saskatchewan Party government proposes when it comes to health care or privatization of health services or, Mr. Speaker, trying to come along and saying that they're protecting people's information, on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we do not believe it for one second.

So therefore we're going to take the time to study this bill, see where the impacts would be, talk to people, vet it through our own system, Mr. Speaker, and tell the people of Saskatchewan what the intent is, and what they have to watch out for, and to show them the track history of this government. And, Mr. Speaker, the track history of this government for health services has been poor. The track history for protecting people's private information has been dismal. And, Mr. Speaker, their track record for selling off the Crowns like the Information Services Corporation has been something that the people of Saskatchewan did not want, and yet they betrayed that particular trust, Mr. Speaker.

So once again I look at the notes of Bill 149 and the comments that the minister had made as it relates to *The Vital Statistics Act*, that it's important that we take the time to understand what is being done in this bill or any other bill. So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I move we adjourn debate on Bill No. 149, *An Act to amend The Health Administration Act*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill 149. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 151 — *The Pharmacy Amendment Act, 2014*

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of *The Pharmacy Amendment Act, 2014*. All health providers including pharmacists play an important role, working to their full scope of practice on a collaborative team. These amendments will expand scope of practice for pharmacists, and they will benefit patients through health care services that are more efficient and accessible.

Mr. Speaker, it makes sense to better meet the needs of patients by using the full skills of pharmacists. Due to their accessibility, pharmacists are frequently patients' first point of contact in the health care system. This is particularly true in rural areas where pharmacies may be open longer hours than medical clinics or may be more easily accessed than the clinic.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments to *The Pharmacy Act, 1996* will allow pharmacists to administer vaccines and drugs such as a flu shot and vitamin B₁₂ shots. In addition, the amendments will enable pharmacists to order, access, and use laboratory tests, working in collaboration with a physician. As pharmacists

move into a more clinical role, pharmacy technicians will assume more of the technical duties such as dispensing. To support this move, amendments will also regulate pharmacy technicians to ensure that they are able to independently assume many of these duties in a safe and an effective manner.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also bringing forward a few housekeeping amendments. We're changing the name of the legislation to *The Pharmacy and Pharmacy Disciplines Act*. The name change reflects that once we make amendments to *The Pharmacy Act, 1996*, the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacists will be responsible for regulating two separate pharmacy professions: pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. We're also clarifying terminology concerning pharmacy ownership. The amendments are clear that pharmacists remain in control of pharmacies.

Mr. Speaker, our goal is providing leadership and making the changes needed to ensure Saskatchewan residents receive timely and accessible health care services. This is another example of how we continue to put the patient first in everything we do. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of *The Pharmacy Amendment Act, 2014*. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Health has moved that Bill No. 151, *The Pharmacy Amendment Act, 2014* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again it's my pleasure on behalf of the official opposition to stand in my place today and again give a few comments on the Bill 151, *The Pharmacy Act*.

And, Mr. Speaker, again at the outset we look at the consultation that the minister indicated that was done with the pharmacists, Mr. Speaker. And we look at the whole notion when I go into a drug store, Mr. Speaker, a lot of people that I line up with when you get some of your flu shots or you get some of your . . . On occasion we get a cough and a cold, so what we do is we go to the pharmacist. And I noticed a lot of people in that particular line up to get their medicines or cough syrup or whatever they're there for, they have a lot of trust and they have a lot of confidence in the pharmacist. As they line up there's a ton of questions, and the pharmacists seem to be very, very confident in the sense of being able to prescribe and give advice to a lot of the patients that have a wide variety of ailments, Mr. Speaker.

So I look at the pharmacist as a vital part of our health services delivery system. It's important that we know that they have a lot of, they gain a lot of trust and confidence from a lot of people throughout Saskatchewan and all corners of our province. And, Mr. Speaker, they also abide by very, very strict regulation and oversight from their own association.

So I think, as you look at the bill itself, Bill 151, in the process of efficiency, I think, expanding what pharmacists can do I don't think is a major challenge for a lot of folks. We know that *The Pharmacy Act* and the College of Pharmacists now covers more professions including the pharmacist technicians. So having them come under a different name or a different Act that deals with both the pharmacists and the pharmacist technicians in the new Act, being the pharmacy discipline Act, Mr.

Speaker, we think that in the name of efficiency that this would certainly be probably the positive thing to do.

But we do have some questions. I don't think there are a whole list of questions, but we certainly want to get the information and input from the pharmacists themselves, and to make sure that the continued success that they have enjoyed in terms of confidence from people will continue to build in the future, and that as you look at the bill itself, where you're able to order and access lab tests, you know, as the minister indicated, that you're able to administer certain vaccines — and I'm assuming flu vaccine might be one of them — that they work closely with pharmacy technicians. The pharmacy technicians are getting more advanced in a more inclusive role, and of course they work in concert with the pharmacist themselves.

So all the bill here that we see, Mr. Speaker, deals with the pharmacist and the pharmacist association, the College of Pharmacists. They obviously will be consulted. I certainly hope that the government has done that on their part, but we will do the same as well. And if we see that there's nothing here that we would be concerned about and that in the efficiency of our health care system, that this helps that process along, then, Mr. Speaker, I think we would certainly look favourably on that.

But until that point that we're able to get advice and input and certainly approach a few agencies and groups of people, then we need to take the time to study the bill to ensure what the government says it's intending to do with the bill, it's followed through right to the point. So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn the debate on Bill 151, *An Act to amend The Pharmacy Act, 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*. I so move.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Athabasca has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 151. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 141 — *The Archives and Public Records Management Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — And the parks. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak about *The Archives and Public Records Management Act*, which is a new Act incorporating substantial amendment to *The Archives Act, 2004*.

The Archives and Public Records Management Act will improve the institution's visibility as the province's archive, advance government accountability for the management of public records, and provide the framework for effective delivery of the archive's mandate, particularly in the electronic records environment. The legislation provides for a name change for the agency to the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan. This change will more clearly identify the province's archive and will distinguish the role of the institution as a custodian of Saskatchewan's documentary history.

Thousands of visitors use the archives in person at its offices in Regina and Saskatoon or by distance through its website and reference tools. The archives responded to over 5,000 inquiries in 2013-14. Mr. Speaker, there's pride in our province in preserving and researching family and local history, the history of government, and the social-historical development of our many cultural groups. Academics, genealogists, students, teachers, film producers, homeowners, historians, writers, legal counsel, and government employees use archival records. The Saskatchewan Archives provides that service to the people of Saskatchewan.

The name change for the legislation reflects the important role of the Saskatchewan Archives and maintaining the effective management of public records created by the Premier, ministers of the Crown, government institutions, Crown corporations, the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Assembly Service, officers of the Assembly, and the courts.

In terms of public record keeping, since its creation in 1945, the archives has acted as a central agency providing records management advice to the Government of Saskatchewan. *The Archives and Public Records Management Act* continues that function by more explicitly defining public records. It clarifies the role of the Provincial Archivist in establishing policies, standards, and guidelines for the management of public records. It strengthens the prohibition relating to the destruction of public records other than through an approved record schedule, and it reinforces the role of the public records committee in terms of record schedule development.

Since April 1st of this year, the Saskatchewan Archives has reviewed 656 disposal requests involving over 6,000 boxes of material, has authorized 1800 metres of public record for disposal, and has identified 146 metres of record for transfer to the archives for historical preservation.

This legislation facilitates the important mandate of the archives and provides the framework for all government institutions, Crown corporations, the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Assembly Service, officers of the Assembly, and the courts to be compliant with the Act in terms of records management by 2016, as directed by this government.

Mr. Speaker, similar to legislation in other provinces or territories, the bill makes it an offence to alter, remove, or destroy a public record unless pursuant to an approved record schedule. With the goal of deterring such offences, a conviction will carry a maximum fine of \$25,000. This fine is comparable to that of Quebec and is higher than the maximum fine specified in legislation in New Brunswick, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut.

Mr. Speaker, the public record created by the Government of Saskatchewan is almost entirely an electronic record and has specific management and preservation needs. The Saskatchewan Archives provides the expertise and works with the government to put in place the necessary protocols for managing electronic records. This legislation clarifies that all public records regardless of format are subject to the Act.

In terms of electronic records, this includes the maintenance, updating, and migration of records as necessary to ensure

usability and accessibility from the point of creation through active use and, if of historical value, transfer the archives by the established records retention and disposal process.

Furthermore, proposed changes in *The Archives and Public Records Management Act* clarify terminology and application and ensure the availability of electronic record for capture by the Saskatchewan Archives as required by its mandate.

[16:15]

The bill also clarifies the role of the board of directors by updating the responsibility of the board in setting a strategic direction for the institution. This reflects current practice. The board examines the ways in which the key objects and functions of the archives can be most effectively delivered, studies options for long-term planning in areas of accommodation and operating budgets, and analyzes impacts to service delivery. This ensures accountable management of the annual grant allocation from the Government of Saskatchewan while exploring external funding opportunities and partnerships with other interest groups.

Membership on the board is broadened by the bill to allow for academic representation from the Canadian academic community involved with the study of social or archival sciences.

Mr. Speaker, *The Archives and Public Records Management Act* exempts certain records from *The Health Information Protection Act*, HIPA. The proposed exemption will allow for reasonable access to historical records of the province for research purposes while maintaining necessary protocols to avoid breaches of privacy.

Since April 1st of this year, the archives has received 67 access requests involving the review of 60,000 pages of archival material. A request can include a single file or thousands of sheets of paper representing several metres of records. HIPA requirements necessitate the archivists undertake the detailed review of a large volume of material usually not required for the archival record, which in turn results in delayed response to access requests. Mr. Speaker, the proposed exemption will allow for reasonable access to historical records of the province for research purposes while maintaining necessary protocols at the archives to avoid breaches of privacy in the use of the archival records.

The HIPA exemption includes safeguards to ensure that personal health information of individuals is protected where it exists in the archival record. The exemption does not pertain to any other trustees or designated archives, and it does not free them from their obligation to apply section 29 of HIPA to records in their custody.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Archives has been working closely with the Legislative Assembly Office, court services, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and the Ministry of Health who are impacted by *The Archives and Public Records Management Act*. Changes in terminology encompassing public records management are the result of detailed and ongoing consultation with records managers and government legal advice and discussion by the public records

committee.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of *The Archives and Public Records Management Act*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport has moved that Bill No. 141, *The Archives and Public Records Management Act* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I again, once again, am pleased to stand in my place today and offer initial comments on Bill 141.

I think it's important to note that there is a lot of issues that were raised as it relates to the provincial archives and how, as the minister has alluded to, that we do an effective recording of the information that the people of Saskatchewan deserve as a result of our history. And, Mr. Speaker, there's no question that a lot of people out there certainly think that the value of keeping a lot of recorded information is very important and that the Archives Board, being the custodians of that Saskatchewan information and documentation and historical data, is something that a lot of people in Saskatchewan certainly see as a good investment that must be supported in every which way it can.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I notice from the initial comments that there's 5,000 inquiries and, Mr. Speaker, it would be nice if the minister would be able to break down those inquiries as to who's using the archive services, Mr. Speaker, the range of services that the 5,000 inquiries asked for, and how satisfied they were with the information that they had asked for and hopefully got.

So I think it's important, Mr. Speaker. Those 5,000 inquiries really give us a good glimpse of which people are using this information. It's a great sense of how they use the information and how it's helpful. And I think it's really important. It is something that we would like to see happen because obviously if you have 5,000 inquiries, is it based on the media? Is it based on university people? Is it business? Is it people from different families? It'd be nice to have a breakdown as to which of those 5,000 inquiries, you know, where are they from and who they represent.

And the reason why I'm saying that, Mr. Speaker, because as the minister spoke about some of the changes, he also spoke about clarifying the role of the board. And he also talked about external representation being on the board. And I'm assuming that when you invite external representation on the board, and I'm sure that was also mentioned, that they're also asking people to be, to participate by way of financial support towards the activities of the Archives Board.

So we need to clarify that as well. Yes, we believe clarifying the role of the board is important, but we also want to know what the minister meant by external representation on that board, and who would they be inviting. This is some of the information that we need to speak about.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in this day and age when we look at the

whole notion of . . . We spoke about it early, the electronic records, the texting, you know, things like the tweeting services, Mr. Speaker, or the email that is happening, the cellphone calls, Mr. Speaker, or pictures taken on cellphones nowadays. The minister spoke about the fines for altering or changing or destroying some of that history.

Well, Mr. Speaker, where is the fine line difference between notes that somebody may have taken at a meeting with an MLA or whether the notes of somebody who may have texted some information to a member of this Assembly? Is that considered public information?

These are some of the things that we have to really find out and ask questions about because it's important, as I mentioned, that we do have an effective protection of a lot of the information. But how much information is necessary to achieve what the people of Saskatchewan want in their archives collection versus private discussion and private information?

So it's really, really important that we define that as well. So the minister's talking about altering or removing information in various formats. These are some of the questions that we certainly have to ask. And I'm glad he didn't mention the HIPA situation because obviously there's a lot of private information, health information that you don't want to share too much with people.

And it's just all this access to information, Mr. Speaker. It's phenomenal as to what Saskatchewan can expect in the future. And given the technology, we can almost see that there's all kinds of formats of information that this bill could certainly impact, whether it's a photo on your camera or whether it's a text or an email. All the technology that is out there, Mr. Speaker, we have to make sure that we distinguish the role of the Archives Board to do an effective collection of the information and protect that historical information, but at the same time not be frivolous in trying to get information from private conversations and certainly private exchange of information, if it's electronically or written.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's also important we look at the actual cabinet itself. I know a lot of ministers that have a lot of information, and how does the archive collection system coincide with the cabinet confidentiality issue that governments enjoy? And when I say governments enjoy, there's a lot of information shared in cabinet, sometimes handwritten information, sometimes notes passed between two members. And a lot . . . that information, is that considered public information? Are any of the cabinet documents considered public information? Like what exactly is the bill trying to achieve when we are speaking of access to ministers or access to the Premier's office in terms of what was discussed and so on and so forth?

So there's a lot of confidential, highly classified discussions cabinets have on a wide variety of issues, Mr. Speaker. And how does this bill impact that particular aspect that sometimes premiers and cabinet folks have discussions of the sort of nature that are highly confidential? Does this Act contradict that? We need to ask those questions, Mr. Speaker, and see exactly where this is going.

So I think it's important that we look at the bill itself and we give it careful, careful scrutiny. Who is using the archives? What does the minister mean by external partnerships? Questions of how it impacts the various formats of communication in today's technology. And the list goes on and on in terms of what information we need from this bill, and that's why it's important we take the time to study it.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 141, *An Act respecting the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Public Records Management and making consequential amendment to other Acts and Regulations*. I so move.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 141, *The Archives and Public Records Management Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 142 — *The Archives and Public Records Management Consequential Amendments Act, 2014/Loi de 2014 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Archives and Public Records Management Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I also rise to speak about *The Archives and Public Records Management Consequential Amendments Act, 2014* which provides updated references in both *The Evidence Act* and *The Education Act*. These bills are bilingual and therefore require a separate Act to make consequential amendments.

The change to *The Education Act, 1995* is required to accommodate the name change of the institution to the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan. The change to *The Evidence Act* reflects the name change of the legislation, *The Archives and Public Records Management Act*. To conclude, I am pleased to move second reading of *The Archives and Public Records Management Consequential Amendments Act, 2014*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The minister has moved second reading of Bill No. 142, *The Archives and Public Records Management Consequential Amendments Act, 2014*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'm pleased to offer initial comments. And we noticed that this particular bill, Bill 142, is actually a complementary piece to the bill that I spoke about previously, Bill 141.

And, Mr. Speaker, I understand that there is a language issue that needs to be clarified in this particular consequential amendment Act, and that certainly that as we look at *The Archives Act*, there is some overflowing of information that needs to be shared from a variety of different departments and in this case the Education department, the Justice department.

And we look at the consequential amendments of this particular Act as a normal course of business when you're making wider changes to a main Act and that Act of course being Bill 141.

So on that note, we certainly concur that any overlapping and any coordination with other bills impacted are important, and if there's a language provision in this particular consequential amendment Act, that we must entertain that and support that. And so on that note, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 142, *An Act to make consequential amendments resulting from the enactment of The Archives and Public Records Management Act*. I so move.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 142, *The Archives and Public Records Management Consequential Amendments Act, 2014*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 143 — *The Degree Authorization Amendment Act, 2014*

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

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to move second reading of Bill No. 143, *The Degree Authorization Amendment Act, 2014*. *The Degree Authorization Act* has been in effect since October 29, 2012, and aims to enhance post-secondary education in Saskatchewan. It will do this by offering the opportunity to expand degree-granting authority to post-secondary institutions other than the two universities, provided they meet the standards required by a quality assurance review process.

This legislation holds three key components. One, it provides greater accessibility for students in our province. As our population and economy continue to grow, so too do our opportunities. It remains vitally important to stay receptive to the needs of students and their future aspirations. This legislation provides a framework for our post-secondary system to acknowledge these needs and deliver a response.

Two, it ensures a robust quality assurance process. Increasingly, outside jurisdictions, both nationally and internationally, are moving toward establishing quality assurance bodies. These bodies provide the necessary expertise to assess and evaluate new degree proposals. The quality assurance process gives learners here at home and those coming to Saskatchewan confidence in their decision to attain their post-secondary education right here.

[16:30]

And three, Mr. Speaker, this legislation protects the long-standing reputations of the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan. As we engage and enhance relationships with other jurisdictions, our institutions are building new partnerships. The legislation ensures these partnerships are both legitimate and complementary.

Overall this legislation not only provides new opportunities for Saskatchewan institutions, students, and communities. It also ensures that Saskatchewan post-secondary education maintains the high level of quality it is known for.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation allows post-secondary institutions other than the universities to apply for authorization to offer a degree program. Each degree must be authorized under this legislation. To be authorized, an institution must undergo the quality assurance review process. The process assesses an institution and its proposed degree program using nationally accepted quality standards published by the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada.

In the first stage of the application process, the ministry reviews the program proposal to determine how it fits in the Saskatchewan post-secondary system and how it will benefit students. Mr. Speaker, it is then determined if the proposal will be referred to the Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board, or otherwise known as SHEQAB, for a quality assurance review.

Mr. Speaker, the SHEQAB is an arm's-length board appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The board has expertise in quality assurance and has extensive experience in both academic and administrative post-secondary education.

Through institutional self-assessments and expert panel reviews, the board assesses an institution's capacity to offer degree-level programming as well as the quality of the proposed degree program. They will then make a recommendation as to whether to support or to refuse an authorization of the degree program.

If granted, Mr. Speaker, an authorization will be only for a certain period of time, after which the institution must apply for re-authorization. This will involve the institution having to undergo some or all of the quality assurance review process again. The authorization to grant degrees may also have terms and conditions attached to it in order to ensure accountability.

Although funding is outside the scope of the Act, I would like to add that any institution requesting public funds must request it through the normal government budget process. And it is a legislative requirement that any private institution make financial security arrangements to ensure students are protected in case the program ends or the institution closes.

The Government of Saskatchewan and the SHEQAB place a high priority on providing Saskatchewan students with a quality post-secondary education that will enable them to succeed in the labour market and pursue further studies. Mr. Speaker, the provincial government understands the importance of post-secondary education, and we want to be responsive to the needs of our post-secondary institutions, our students, and our province.

The amendments we will be discussing have been consulted on with stakeholders including SHEQAB, the institutions that will be directly impacted by the proposed amendment of the legislation, and the broader Saskatchewan post-secondary sector. Overall stakeholders are supportive of the amendments.

The collaborative approach used to inform the content of Bill 143 ensures that the province's legislation is fair and balanced and does not adversely affect any of the stakeholders or institutions covered by it. Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank each individual and organization in the province who took the time to provide input on this very important piece of legislation.

I would like to provide an overview of the contents of the proposed amendments to *The Degree Authorization Act*. The key changes, Mr. Speaker, to the legislation are removing the grandfathering period from the Act and adding a regulation-making power to specify the date only in the degree authorization regulations. Grandfathering is the means of temporarily exempting institutions from the application of the Act, and providing them with the time to come into compliance with the Act if they need to do so.

When the Act was proclaimed in October 2012, it was acknowledged that some institutions would require time to meet the requirements of the Act so as to not negatively affect students. In particular two institutions, Briercrest College and Cape Breton University in partnership with Great Plains College, required this consideration. There were also two institutions, Athabasca University and Lakeland College, with whom the ministry needed to engage in more extensive discussions to determine whether any of their degree-granting activities were subject to the Act. These four institutions were grandfathered to provide them and the ministry with time to address the new requirements outlined in the Act.

Currently, the grandfathering period ends November 30th, 2016. Both the Act and the regulations currently specify the grandfathering period end date. We are proposing that the end date be removed from the Act and specified only in the regulations. To do this, subsection 4(3) of the Act needs to be amended by replacing the specified deadline of November 30th, 2016 with "until a prescribed date." Then a regulation-making power needs to be added to section 23 authorizing the prescribing of a date.

Once the bill is passed, the ministry will bring forward proposed amendments to the regulations, which is expected to occur in 2015-16. One of the proposed amendments is anticipated to extend the grandfathering period. If another extension to the grandfathering period is required in the future, the change can be made more expediently by amending just the regulations. Mr. Speaker, we are amending the Act and regulations to give grandfathered institutions more time to come into compliance with that, while assuring students are not negatively affected.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to explain why it has become necessary to extend the grandfathering period, and what the impact will be for Briercrest, Cape Breton University in partnership with Great Plains College, Athabasca University, and Lakeland College.

Briercrest currently offers 10 degrees that are named in a way that does not meet the nomenclature requirements for theological degrees as specified in the regulations. Presently, only one of these 10 degrees is grandfathered. The other nine degrees will be grandfathered when the regulations are amended as part of a separate regulatory amendment proposal. Briercrest

can come into compliance in three ways: first, it can apply for authorization of some, or all, of its 10 grandfathered degrees; second, it can change the names of some, or all, of the 10 degrees so that the new names comply with the naming requirements for theological degrees in the regulations; and third, it can suspend some, or all, of the 10 programs.

Mr. Speaker, Briercrest's preferred path to compliance is authorization. However, with only two years remaining in the grandfathering period, this is just not feasible, based on the process for degree authorization. Extending the grandfathering period is the best option.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to Athabasca University, when the Act was proclaimed in 2012 it was not clear whether certain aspects of Athabasca's outreach model might be subject to the Act. The extended grandfathering period will give Athabasca more time to address any compliance issues that it identifies.

And, Mr. Speaker, Cape Breton University partners with Great Plains College to offer a Master of Business Administration degree in our province. Cape Breton University must apply for authorization if it intends to continue delivering this program beyond the grandfathering period. The Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board has recently developed quality assurance standards to assess graduate level programs. These standards were approved by the previous minister in May of 2014.

The extended grandfathering period will give Cape Breton University a more reasonable period of time in which to apply for authorization now that the graduate standards are in place.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, the ministry has determined that there is no longer a need to grandfather Lakeland College. Lakeland was originally grandfathered to allow sufficient time to determine if Lakeland College had a physical presence in our province. It has been determined that Lakeland College has no physical presence in the province related to any offering of their degree programs. As a result, we will propose that Lakeland be removed from the list of grandfathered institutions in the forthcoming regulatory amendment package. If Lakeland's degree-granting activities change in the future so that the legislation applies to it, the college will be required to comply.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to emphasize that these are the only changes to the Act being proposed at this time, and I'm happy to speak to these amendments today. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 143, *The Degree Authorization Amendment Act, 2014*. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The minister has moved second reading of Bill No. 143, *The Degree Authorization Amendment Act, 2014*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'm pleased to stand in my place to offer initial comments on this particular bill, Bill 143. It talks about *The Degree Authorization Act*.

And, Mr. Speaker, I notice with, you know, a lot of enthusiasm that the minister spoke about the path to compliance. And

certainly I'm assuming that the path to compliance are being undertaken by the various institutions that he made reference to.

But, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that the biggest impediment and certainly the biggest blockade, I think, on the path to compliance is the ability of that government to follow through with their commitment that they made to these number of institutions several years ago.

So, Mr. Speaker, this basically shows that this government didn't do their homework properly. They didn't have their proper consultation. Now they're coming back after the fact, and it really involves a number of organizations and institutions, and yet it seems once again, Mr. Speaker, we're back to the drawing board with this minister and this particular government.

When they make comments and they make commitments out there, part of the commitments that you make is you must do your homework, whether it's on smart meters or whether it's on hiring lean consultants from the states. You also want to make sure that you do the proper work that's necessary to achieve what the minister identified as his three priorities as a result of this bill, which is greater accessibility for Saskatchewan students, which he says ensures a robust degree-granting process and also protects the U of S and U of R [University of Regina] in terms of their status and stature throughout our province and throughout our country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, he went on to explain the process. He talked about self-assessment. He talked about the re-authorization option. And, Mr. Speaker, he also spoke about a number of issues that pertain to the history of some of these institutions and how they can be grandfathered in. And what happened, Mr. Speaker? Clearly the government didn't do their homework, and as a result of that we're back to Bill No. 143 that talks about degree authorization, something that occurred back in 2012 as is indicated, and now we're here, an outside time frame of 2016, so four years to get your homework done, Mr. Speaker.

Thank goodness that they weren't in charge of the institutions themselves to seek degree authorizations, because I'm sure these institutions would have been much ill-served by advice from this particular government. And that's one of the things that we see in this particular bill, Mr. Speaker. It's catch-up. It's the fact that the government didn't do their homework. And now as a result of that, Athabasca and Cape Breton, Great Plains and of course Briercrest are impacted.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a bit of time with Lakeland College. Lakeland College, I'm assuming that they have been taken out of the Act. Now obviously they probably achieved or wanted to achieve the whole ability to authorize degrees within their institution. So now they have been taken off the particular list of institutions that may have been given the authorization to grant degrees. And, Mr. Speaker, the question I have is, how did they get into the mix to begin with? Because obviously Lakeland is based, I'm assuming, out of Lloydminster. How did they fare in terms of the discussions? Was this a pet project of one of their MLAs that couldn't deliver, Mr. Speaker? Now that they've been taken off the list, Lakeland College is no longer on what the minister made reference to, the path to compliance that the Lloydminster Lakeland College — I'm assuming that's the

one he's making reference to — is no longer able to achieve the degree-granting option for their institutions.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's again a lot of questions here that we have. And he mentioned the fact that many of these organizations, it doesn't indicate that there'll be some financial support for them from the province. It doesn't compel the province to provide financial support, Mr. Speaker, and that's why it's important. That's why it's important to see what options are there for them in the future, and if those options come at the cost of other institutions and other entities that provide educational supports to our students and to our people of Saskatchewan. We need to know those questions, Mr. Speaker.

Now obviously if you look at the U of S, you know, and the U of R, they have been world-class leaders in providing the university-setting training and education. And it's certainly important, we think on this side of the Assembly, that the U of S and the U of R are really very solid organizations that have served our province well through time and through history.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we look at the universities and the status and the stature that they have achieved for themselves over the many years that they have provided a tremendous environment for teaching and for assisting Saskatchewan people and many people throughout the world, a world-class education in a higher learning setting. Now, Mr. Speaker, obviously the U of S and the U of R need to have heavy involvement and heavy consultation on this whole notion of authorizing degrees by some of the other organizations that wish to achieve it, namely Athabasca and of course Cape Breton, at Great Plains, and Briercrest, Mr. Speaker.

So it is obviously important to see how the U of S and U of R are engaged in this whole process. I think that since they've had and they've led the particular effort to grant degrees for decades, Mr. Speaker, that they'd be a great source of information how to clear the barrier and how to clear the path to complying by some of the organizations that are applying to be able to authorize the degrees that the minister is speaking of.

[16:45]

So quite frankly and quite clearly, if you want to provide greater accessibility for students throughout the province by granting some of these institutions the ability to grant a degree, then do your homework as a government. That's the first message that we have for you as a result of this process.

If you want to ensure a robust degree-granting process, then make sure you seek advice from those that have been doing it for decades, and that's the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina. These organizations and these institutions have a proud history of how to handle degree-granting opportunities. And we need to make sure that they're engaged and that they can give as much advice to not only the government but to those that wish to seek a degree-granting option as well.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the third component the minister speaks about is the protection of the U of S and the U of R. And as I said at the outset, they are a key player in this whole process,

and do they feel that . . . And I'm assuming that they do not feel diminished in any way, shape, or form because obviously there are an intelligent lot at both the university levels. So they are probably embracing this, studying this, and trying to find out how they can be of assistance because I don't see how they would be threatened by this.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think once you begin to water down the degree authorization process, it would be of a concern to the higher institutions of learning. And this is why it's important that I tell the minister today, when you didn't do your homework from day one, you ought to do your homework better from this day to make sure you have proper engagement with the U of S and the U of R because they have the ability to give you some key advice. And, Mr. Speaker, half of being intelligent — I use that phrase on myself on a continual basis — half of being intelligent is knowing what you're dumb at and then you go seek advice from those that are in the know, Mr. Speaker.

So quite frankly from the evidence that we've seen, this minister and this department and this government did not do their homework to allow the smooth transition of degree authorization for a number of smaller institutions throughout our province. So we don't take their advice, nor do we take their word that part of the effort under this bill is to provide greater accessibility for students.

They say the nice things but, Mr. Speaker, when it comes down to time to do the homework and get things done, the Saskatchewan Party get a big fat F from this opposition on this front, Mr. Speaker. And once again we see, Mr. Speaker, that they try and blame a number of institutions and a number of organizations on how they have made a mess of this process, and they need more time.

And now they're simply sitting back and praising themselves for not doing their homework, Mr. Speaker. And that's one of the things that we want to make sure that we expose to the people of Saskatchewan on this particular bill.

So we continue, we continue to watch how they have mismanaged one issue after another, of how they've made a mess of one problem after another. And they continue to be in denial in the sense that they don't want to admit their mistakes, Mr. Speaker.

And if they make a mistake, they come back a few years later, as evidenced in this particular bill, saying, oh well, we made a mistake. So now we've got to put another Act in place. We've got to put another series of steps in place. But we're going to make it all sound good because we didn't know what we were doing to begin with, but now we'll make ourselves look even better by getting more time to figure out what we agreed to and more time to figure out how we can make commitments without doing homework and, Mr. Speaker . . . or their homework. We're seeing evidence of that under this particular bill, Bill 143.

So I would point out to a lot of the organizations that are listening that it's important. It's important that we pay attention to these particular bills because there's a lot of explanation of the process.

There's a bit of issues I have with the whole notion of self-assessment. Obviously we want to make sure that the organizations that have the degree-authorization ability have good consultation with those that have done it before, such as the U of S and U of R. And, Mr. Speaker, it worries me that a government that can't get their homework done on such an important issue, that's who some of these institutions have to go back to for reauthorization. So, Mr. Speaker, these are some of the initial comments I have on this particular bill.

We want to make sure, we want to make sure that all the issues that are presented in this particular bill are thoroughly researched by the opposition, that we have good consultation with the people that are impacted, and that the net effect for the people of Saskatchewan and the opposition is that we put together a good process, a process that people understand and that we remove as many obstacles, as many obstacles on that path to compliance to ensure that the degree-authorization option, as described in this bill, is achievable for many organizations like Briercrest and Athabasca, Mr. Speaker.

So from that point on, we need to make sure we get advice. We don't need advice from a government who doesn't know what they're doing. We need advice from the U of S and the U of R and people in the know. And that's what I would encourage them to do today is to put his fate in that process, help this minister along and this government along, and we'll certainly look forward to some of that advice that you may have for the opposition as it relates to this bill.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 143, *An Act to amend The Degree Authorization Amendment Act*. I so move.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No 143, *The Degree Authorization Amendment Act, 2014*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — This House stands adjourned to 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:51.]

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