



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

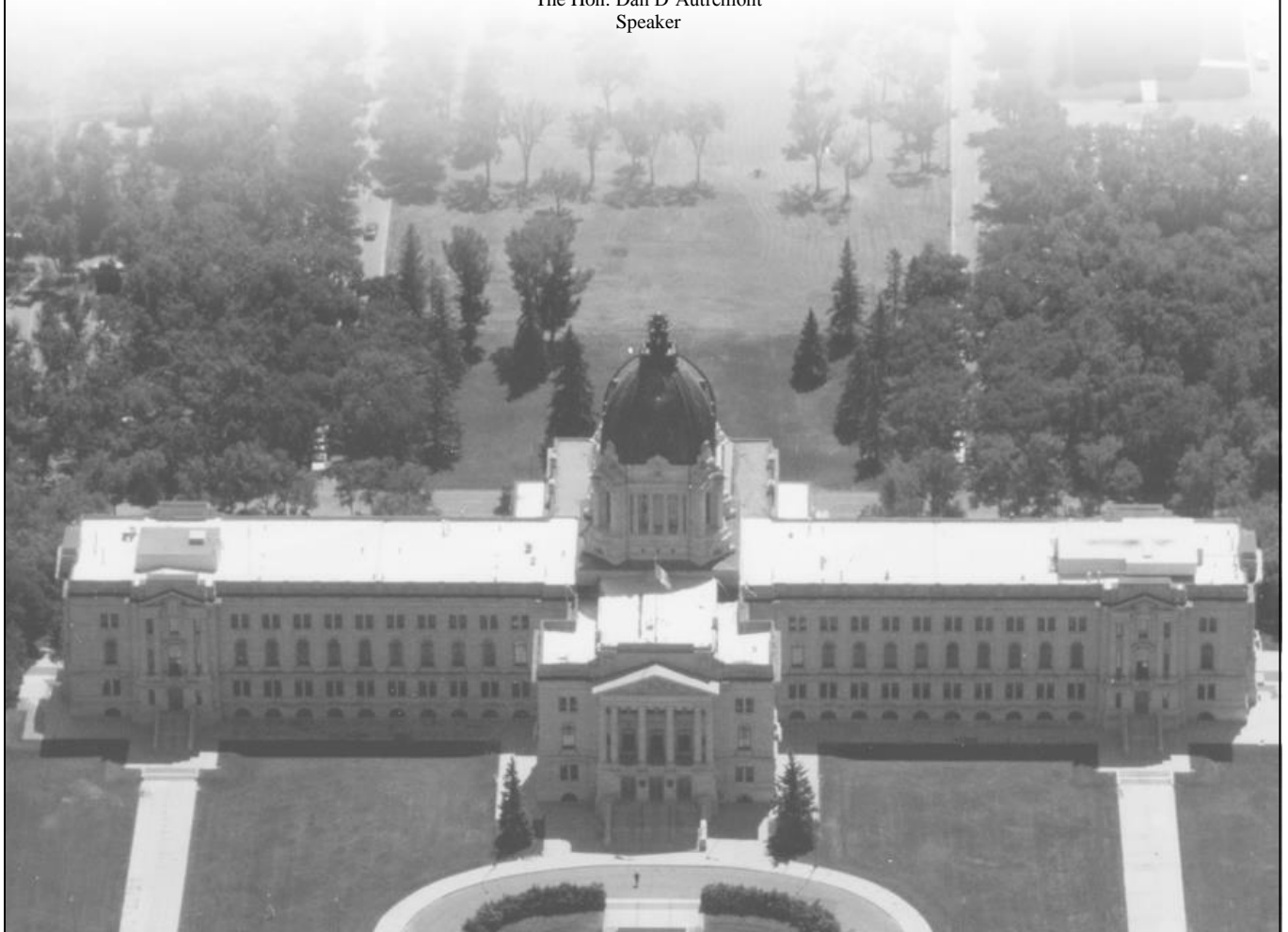
of the

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
Young, Colleen	SP	Lloydminster

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce to the House, seated in the Speaker's gallery, the Hon. Ron Barclay and Mrs. Barclay, who are here today to observe the reappointment, his reappointment as the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. I would ask all members to welcome them.

I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery today I'm pleased to introduce three guests: Betty Ann Pottruff, head of counsel for children program; Kim Newsham, senior Crown counsel with strategic initiatives and innovation division in the Ministry of Justice; and Lisa Broda who is here on behalf of the Saskatchewan Advocate for Children and Youth.

Mr. Speaker, you'll soon hear the new counsel for children program is taking a very important step forward today. This program represents years of hard work on behalf on the Ministry of Justice and the Advocate for Children and Youth, so we are pleased to have these three individuals join us today to mark that occasion.

Our thanks to Ms. Pottruff, Ms. Newsham, and Ms. Broda for their great work in creating this program and promoting the legal rights of children in Saskatchewan. So I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their legislature today.

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 35 great students. They're grade 12 students from Humboldt Collegiate in Humboldt. And with them is their teacher, Mr. David Millette, who has brought a class to this Assembly every year for I don't know how many years now, but he's very dedicated in bringing his students to see how this Chamber works. Also with him is an intern, Erika Knorr, and two parents, Judy Wiest and Ruth McKeown. If everyone could please join me in welcoming them to their Assembly.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and on behalf of the official opposition I would like to take this opportunity to welcome two very important people in the arts community here today. First of all we have Mr. David Kyle from the Saskatchewan Arts Board. So I wanted to welcome him and thank him for all the work he does for the Arts Board. And also the former president of the board, Ms. Byrna Barclay, who also did some amazing work in her term at the helm of the Arts Board.

We all know how important the Arts Board is to arts and culture in Saskatchewan. And indeed at the Lieutenant Governor's Arts Awards a couple months ago, all the recipients acknowledged the importance that the Arts Board plays in their life. So thank you for the work you do and welcome to your Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly, I'm pleased to introduce guests seated in your gallery. They're members of the southeast health committee based out of the Estevan area, Mr. Speaker. And I'd ask if they would give us a wave when I read their names.

Joining us today is the mayor of the city of Estevan, Roy Ludwig; reeve of the RM [rural municipality] of Coalfields, Stan Lainton; the reeve of the RM of Estevan, Kelly Lafrentz; reeve of the RM of Browning, Pius Loustel; the reeve of the RM of Benson, David Hoffort; as well as representing the RM of Cymri, Councillor Harvey Shindel. As well joining them is the CEO [chief executive officer] of St. Joseph's Hospital in Estevan, Greg Hoffort.

Mr. Speaker, this committee was formed about five years ago to help with physician recruitment and improving services at St. Joe's Hospital and, Mr. Speaker, they've done a great job on the recruitment side. And as well, Mr. Speaker, we were pleased to announce that a new CT [computerized tomography] scanner will be located in St. Joe's Hospital, beginning in 2015. And that will go a long way to improving access to citizens of southeast Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the committee is now amalgamated with the St. Joseph's Hospital Foundation. So really today is among their last duties as a committee and, Mr. Speaker, if I can, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, I want to thank them for their work on their committee and the work that they will be continuing to do with the amalgamated foundation.

I know that they have a great heart and a great passion for serving the people of not just the Estevan area, but the entire southeast Saskatchewan, to help make that area the best place to work, live, and raise a family, Mr. Speaker. And so I want to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly and thank them for all their good work.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Health minister in welcoming these leaders from the Southeast who are at the Assembly today, and thank them for their contributions over the years. And I know what they will continue to do in the years to come, Mr. Speaker, so I'd like to add my voice to those words.

I would also, Mr. Speaker, through you and to all members, I would like to introduce two individuals seated in your gallery and that's Jeff Harms and his son Isaiah Harms who are with us here today. They wanted to see the proceedings. They currently live in the Stewart Valley area. Isaiah is a grade 8 student and

wanted to see what happens at the legislature, so he came today to see it first-hand. I should also note, Mr. Speaker, that Isaiah is an accomplished runner, specializing in 5-K [kilometre] runs. He has enjoyed that pursuit over the last year. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming Jeff and Isaiah to the Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the Minister of Health in welcoming the delegation from Estevan and also echo what the minister has said regarding their contributions to that community.

They have been just unbelievably willing to step up to the plate, whether it is for doctor recruitment, for Estevan getting the CT [computerized tomography] scan, and also in areas outside of health care. When we had the big flood of 2011, there wasn't one of these gentlemen that didn't step up to the plate, and they are just such an asset to the community, and I'm so proud to have worked with them in all these areas. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition that calls for greater protection for Saskatchewan citizens from developers who default on fixed-price contracts with the Saskatchewan government. And we know that in September this year, this government walked away from a new 48-unit, low-income affordable housing project in Regina, allowing a private developer to instead take control of and then rent the units at full market price. When asked how to explain this, the government could allow a private developer to back out of a fixed-price contract without any penalties, the Minister of Social Services said, and I quote: "You're assuming there's these desperate homeless people," showing how disconnected this government is from the realities within our communities. 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 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: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again in the Assembly here today to present petitions as it relates to the unsafe conditions created by that government on Dewdney Avenue and their failure to act in a way that mitigates and responds to those urgent safety concerns. Of course the timely completion of the west bypass is critically important, but urgent and immediate actions are required by this government. 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 the 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 today are signed by concerned residents here in Regina. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to stand in my place to present a petition to build a second bridge for Prince Albert. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to guarantee that a second bridge that serves central and northern Saskatchewan, and as well as the city of Prince Albert, will receive a commitment from senior governments.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition are from Moose Jaw and Saskatoon, and I so present.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition in support of safe staffing levels in long-term care. The petitioners point out that many aspects of long-term care are deteriorating under this government, that the Government of Saskatchewan actually recognize the need for safe staffing levels to provide hands-on care to residents. The petitioners point out that the government is failing to fix the basics in long-term care, including rejecting the further urgent requests from long-term care facilities for increased and needed staffing levels. They talk about the government having removed the regulations requiring a minimum standard of care for seniors, resulting in neglect.

The petitioners also point out that chronic understaffing in long-term care facilities results in unacceptable conditions, including unanswered calls for help, infrequent bathing, and a rise in physical violence amongst residents, and that fixing the basics and achieving real improvement in long-term care services requires a firm commitment to actually listen to front-line health care workers, residents, and their families as opposed to failing to properly listen to their concerns. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully

request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the government to commit to the creation of safe staffing levels for all valued members of the health care team and to reintroduce actual numbers of staff to match the level of care needs and the number of residents under their care in long-term care facilities.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by residents from Swift Current. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition in support of better health care in Saskatchewan. The petitioners, 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 recognize health care is getting worse under its watch and begin fixing the basics by listening to health care workers, patients, and their families; properly maintaining hospitals and care facilities; and focusing its resources on front-line care instead of spending millions on its lean pet project.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens from Langenburg and Melville. I so present.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition from people who are opposed to correctional service job privatization. The government wants to privatize food services in the corrections and young offender facilities, but the government is failing to listen to the front-line food service workers who have many concerns about what the impact will be with the loss of these jobs on the correctional system and on the local communities. And so in the prayer the petitioners:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan may be pleased to cause the government to cancel its privatization in the corrections and young offender facilities in Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and present a petition condemning this government's dangerous smart meter program. The folks at SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] just want to bring to the attention of the Assembly the following: this government knew about major safety concerns related to its smart meter project. It ignored those safety concerns, plowed ahead with the program, and the safety of Saskatchewan families was put at significant risk. So the prayer reads as follows. The petitioners:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan 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.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals that signed this are from Warman, Kamsack, Vanscoy, Saskatoon, and Regina. I so submit.

[13:45]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Saskatchewan Intercultural Association Celebrates 50th Anniversary

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On September 12th, I, along with the member from Saskatoon Southeast, had the pleasure to attend the 50th anniversary of the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association. The celebration involved a delicious multicultural supper, unveiling of their new logo, and some great live entertainment by Delhi 2 Dublin. It was a fun night, and it's so important to celebrate the incredible work of SIA [Saskatchewan Intercultural Association] over the past 50 years.

SIA took time to recognize those who made an outstanding contribution to our community. They were: for volunteerism and leadership, Peter Sen; for language and education, Eleanor Shia; arts and culture, Terri Rau; intercultural relations, Ila Sarkar; organizational work, Nayyar Javed.

Mr. Speaker, the SIA is a non-profit organization that provides services for immigrants and refugees in Saskatoon. Their vision is to "... [make] a difference by upholding human dignity and promoting harmony among all people," and their mission is "To recognize and support the right of every cultural group and individual to retain and develop their distinctive cultural identity, language and arts without political or social impediment — for the mutual benefit of all citizens." SIA has clients from over 50 different countries and run a number of different employment programs, education programs, and performing arts.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join with me in thanking SIA for all the very important work they do in Saskatoon and congratulate them on 50 years. We hope to see their work continue for another 50 years and more. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Counsel for Children Program

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, while it is often said that children are our future, we less often recognize how important it is to allow children to be part of the decisions that will shape the

future they are to inherit.

Roughly 15 years ago, Canada became a signatory to one of the most important human rights treaties in modern history, the UN [United Nations] Convention on the Rights of the Child. The spirit of the convention recognized that while children require a safe and nurturing upbringing, they are also unique individuals with the right to exercise as much agency over their future as they are capable.

I am pleased to rise today in recognition of the action our government is taking to achieve the aspirations of the convention and to provide further support for children in our province who are in need of assistance. Today marks the official launch of the counsel for children program announced in our government's last budget. It is a means to ensure children in protection hearings can have access to legal counsel as decisions are being made about their future. For those children involved, a protection hearing can determine matters as important as where and with whom they are going to live.

To everyone who helped bring this program to fruition, including our partners in the courts, Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan, the child and youth advocate office, and the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee, you have the Assembly's thanks for your dedicated efforts. With your help, some of our most vulnerable children in our province have been given a voice. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Creighton Kodiaks Win Championship

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize the accomplishments of the Creighton Kodiaks, a football team in the Cumberland constituency.

On November 1st the northern Saskatchewan six-man football league held its championship game in Prince Albert. The final was between the defending 2013 champions, the Pinehouse Lakers, and the Creighton Kodiaks. Both teams had gone unbeaten all season. The Creighton Kodiaks defeated the Lakers 67 to 41. There were more than 200 fans, faithful fans from Creighton, that made the 400-kilometre trek to Prince Albert to watch the Kodiaks play.

One of the top players in the game was Creighton's own Evan Linnick, who had torn up the league all year with touchdowns, field goal kicks. During the championship game, Evan scored five touchdowns, eight kicking converts, and one field goal to help the Kodiaks capture their first Ralph Pilz Trophy.

I would like to commend the coaching staff of the Creighton Kodiaks: Jason Straille, Ryan Karakochuk, parents, and staff at Creighton Community School for showing so much pride in your community football team.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating all the players, coaches, volunteers, community members whose hard work helped to make the league championship a reality. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon

Greystone.

National Conference on Women in Engineering

Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last month on behalf of the Minister of Advanced Education, I had the honour of attending the opening session of the National Conference on Women in Engineering held in Saskatoon. This is a national student-run event organized annually by the Canadian Federation of Engineering Students.

Since its inaugural session in 1990, itself a response to the tragic shootings in École Polytechnique in Quebec, this conference has grown to recognize the need for greater diversity within engineering, science, technology, and mathematics. This year the conference theme was clear and concise: Level the Playing Field. This was the first time that Saskatchewan has hosted this national conference.

I'd like to extend a special thank you to the University of Saskatchewan's Jessica Geddert, Chair of the organizing committee, as well as members of her committee and other champions and sponsors that made the conference possible. Over 140 undergraduate student leaders from across the country visited Saskatoon to participate in the conference.

Mr. Speaker, this wasn't just about talking about the barriers women face in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, but through collaboration and with courage it was about acting to overcome these obstacles. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to invite all members to join me in recognizing the hard work of this year's conference organizers as well as the dedication of all conference participants in making vital progress on this important issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Random Acts of Kindness Day and Giving Tuesday

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The spirit of generosity from the people of Saskatchewan is never more evident than this time of year. I, along with approximately 20 businesses, volunteer groups, countless individuals, recently had the pleasure of taking part in South Saskatchewan Community Foundation Random Acts of Kindness Day here in Regina. On this day, we handed out coffee to strangers heading to work, dropping off supplies to charities such as the Humane Society. We plugged expired meters in downtown Regina in an attempt to encourage people to pay it forward in our city.

Mr. Speaker, in that same spirit, today Regina has proclaimed December 2nd, 2014 as Giving Tuesday. Giving Tuesday is a new movement promoting contributions and volunteerism to charities. The initiative was first launched in the United States in 2012 and came to Canada for the first time last year. Described by some by opening day of giving season, Giving Tuesday is a goal of acknowledging the importance of giving, improving attitudes, and increasing volunteerism.

The success of Giving Tuesday depends on the support and the involvement of charities, families, businesses, and individuals to transform the way people think about, talk about, and

participate in the giving season. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members to join with the people of Saskatchewan in taking part in this important movement, Giving Tuesday, by donating to volunteering with many of Saskatchewan's charitable and non-profit organizations. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Remembering Wolfgang Langenbacher

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to mark the passing of a trusted adviser, loving father, and husband. Wolfgang Gerhard Langenbacher passed away surrounded by his family on November 18th.

Wolfgang was born in Bamberg, Germany. In 1956, Wolfgang emigrated to Cleveland, Ohio and graduated from Kent University in 1971. By 1975, he relocated to Regina after finishing studies at UBC [University of British Columbia].

Wolfgang had a deep appreciation and love of the public service. Spending almost 40 years in various positions, he could always be trusted to give an honest opinion and sound advice. Wolfgang started his career in the provincial Department of Revenue, eventually moving to the city of Regina's comptroller's office where he became the Auditor General. From 1998 to 2005, he acted as Dean of Business and Agriculture at what was then known as SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology]. However, my colleagues on this side of the House know Wolfgang best for his provincial public service. Wolfgang's last positions were in the Premier's Executive Council and in the Ministry of Social Services.

Although Wolfgang officially retired last December, he was still teaching M.B.A. [Master of Business Administration] classes at the University of Regina in the Faculty of Business.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Wolfgang's family, particularly his wife of 45 years, Linda, and his sons, Eric and Mark, and his grandchildren. Mr. Speaker, I would welcome all members to join me in recognizing Wolfgang Langenbacher's tireless contribution to his community and this province.

Today I say goodbye to a mentor and a trusted friend. Wolfgang may be gone, but he will never be forgotten.

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

Headstart on a Home for First-Time Homeowners

Mr. Lawrence: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform members about Maple View Condominiums, a new Headstart on a Home project that opened in Moose Jaw on November 28. This 12-unit development will give Moose Jaw families and individuals the opportunity to own their own home.

I'm proud that our government's program has provided almost \$1.8 million in financing for support for these homes. Most importantly, we have worked with our partners, Westcap Management Ltd. and Schultz Electric, to make this project

happen. The aim of this program is to increase the availability of entry-level housing across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the program is working. These projects have been delivered in 16 communities around the province, including Moose Jaw. They have collected statistics that show 93 per cent of the purchasers have been first-time home buyers. When we started this program in 2011, we expected about 1,000 new entry-level homes would be built throughout Saskatchewan in five years. To the end of October 2014, they have financed 1,521 new housing units, either completed or under construction in three years. An additional 354 units have been approved for financing but are not yet under construction.

Mr. Speaker, by working together to provide high-quality housing at an affordable price, we're keeping Saskatchewan strong and moving the community of Moose Jaw forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Fatality in Care Facility and Provision of Long-Term Care

Mr. Broten: — Lorne Rowell's daughter recently wrote to the Premier:

On April 23, 2014, while a resident in a long-term care facility in Saskatoon, my father Norman Lorne Rowell was dropped on his head on a concrete floor from several feet up. Very painful complications from his injuries led to his death on May 16th, 2014.

Others are coming forward about the injuries and deaths their family members have experienced which were caused by preventable incidents in long-term care facilities. I wonder if you truly know the extent of this problem.

So on behalf of Lorne Rowell's family, that's my question for the Premier: does he truly know the extent of this problem?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, on behalf of the government to Mr. Rowell's family, we extend our sympathies, Mr. Speaker. And we express our deep, deep concern around the incident surrounding his untimely and premature passing, Mr. Speaker.

I would also say to the hon. member in direct answer to his question and hers as well — and I think the Minister of Health has had a discussion with his daughter later last week, and I'll defer to him to answer the specific questions around the case — but to her and to the Leader of the Opposition, yes we have been very aware of the importance of reducing all incidents like this. Falls are obviously a little bit different than what we're talking about here, but in that particular case we have committed to a significant system-wide effort to reduce falls in our long-term care facilities, which are down by 25 per cent.

We have committed additional front-line staff, Mr. Speaker; there's no question about it — more care aids, more LPNs [licensed practical nurse], more nurses, significantly more nurses of all designation, 2,400 plus. Mr. Speaker, obviously in this particular area there is great work to do, more work to do. We're going to take that work on very seriously, as we have in the past, with respect to the deployment of more resources and some emergency funding, emergent funding.

Mr. Speaker, in this particular case with these circumstances, I know the minister has been in contact with the family and wishes to look at them, at this particular incident very specifically.

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

Mr. Broten: — I appreciate that the Health minister spoke with Lorne's daughter. But she drove down from Saskatoon today to Regina because she wants the government to know the full extent of the problem, and she wants things to change so other families don't have to go through what hers has experienced.

Lorne was dropped on his head while being transferred from his bed to his chair. The lower part of his body remained in the sling, but he hit his head on the concrete floor. No ambulance was called, and the family was not notified. When the family showed up later that same day and saw that he was injured, there was confusion amongst the staff, and the family was told he had simply fallen out of bed. It wasn't until the following day that they finally learned the truth, that he had been dropped on his head on the concrete floor. Is the Premier seeing the same pattern that I'm seeing?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, additionally, in terms of information for members about this specific case, the Health minister has referred it specifically to the health care ombudsman, now in the Office of the Provincial Ombudsman, a position that our government has resourced.

The ombudsman is looking at a number of incidents, I would expect and has, I think, made it known publicly that she will be reporting back to government on the specific cases. And if there are other systemic issues to be dealt with, I think we'll be hearing from her on those as well. And, Mr. Speaker, we would want her to look specifically at this case that's been raised to try to get answers that are deserved by the family and by all those who have loved ones in long-term care in this province.

[14:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition

Mr. Broten: — Sadly, Mr. Speaker, we have seen a pattern in different locations, in different facilities across the province. The night of Lorne's fall, his family found a broken tooth in his bedding. And the night before he died, his family discovered that he actually had broken three teeth in that fall. So for 23 days, Lorne had multiple undiscovered broken teeth as a result of being dropped on his head. I can't imagine how painful that would have been for him, especially when you think of the other injuries that he sustained in that fall. His daughter says

that her dad was in total agony.

So again to the Premier: not on isolated incidents, but has he seen the same pattern that I'm seeing? And what is he going to do about it?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, certainly my heart goes out to the family of Lorne in this situation. My heart also goes out to the employees that would have been providing care for Lorne when this incident took place. I can't imagine how they must feel, Mr. Speaker, to see somebody that they're entrusted to care for have such an accident as this was, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health has been in contact with the family as well as the health region. The health region has been in contact with the facility, Mr. Speaker. There have been some changes that have taken place in that facility that I can outline in my further answers that will, Mr. Speaker, hopefully not see these types of cases take place.

We are also, Mr. Speaker, working with Saskatoon Health Region to ensure that the patient safety department of that region does review and investigate this case to determine what in fact took place, Mr. Speaker, and to make a determination around critical incident because it wasn't reported as one when it first took place.

Mr. Speaker, I can also inform the House that the facility is ensuring that all staff have training so that they know that the family has to be notified when a fall does take place in long-term care, Mr. Speaker. That is absolutely essential. It didn't happen in this case, but the family must be notified. And that training is ongoing at that facility, and we're going to remind all facilities that that has to take place.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, this was not an accident, but this was a preventable incident, and the family's been very, very clear and strong on that point. In her email to the Premier, the Health minister, she said, "If those of us who have gone through these horrific experiences don't let you know, how many more will go through this next?"

Mr. Speaker, she's concerned about the lack of open communication with family members. And she's concerned about the lack of communication between staff at shift change because she was the one who regularly had to brief the staff on her dad's injuries. Not once did she find a new nurse or care aid that was fully informed of her father's injuries or the preventable incident that caused them. And she is incredibly concerned about short-staffing. She even says that her family not only went to the facility every day to help, but they also hired private help to ensure that their dad was getting the care that he needed.

My question is for the Premier. And again, there's a pattern here: how many of these concerns does he need to hear from different facilities all over the province before he will admit that there is a crisis in seniors' care?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Again, Mr. Speaker, we take all of these types of concerns very seriously, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's why in this particular case my office has already been in touch with the office of the health ombudsman that is housed in the Office of the Ombudsman, Mr. Speaker. But we're also . . . have been in touch with the region, Mr. Speaker, who are working closely with the facility to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that there is orientation that is put in place and proper training for the use of lifts and transferring, lifting, and repositioning for all, Mr. Speaker, staff and students that do work in facilities on practicums.

Mr. Speaker, we're also ensuring that all of our facilities know the requirements when it comes to ensuring that staff members are up to date in terms of a resident's needs, Mr. Speaker, whether that be medication, whether that be other types of needs, Mr. Speaker. But we're also ensuring, Mr. Speaker, that our facilities and our staff know that in the event of a fall — and yes, they are preventable, Mr. Speaker, and we're seeing a 25 per cent reduction in falls — but every one of them has a potential for harm, Mr. Speaker, and the staff need to notify the family when a fall does take place.

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

Mr. Broten: — In the government's Throne Speech when it laid out its plans for the coming year, there was absolutely nothing new for seniors' care. The government just patted itself on the back for its horribly inadequate one-time payment fund from last year and pretended that all is well. And the Health minister, Mr. Speaker, has told the media that there are no other plans for seniors' care. I'm pleased, Mr. Speaker, that the ombudsman is looking into major problems in care facilities, but we cannot keep waiting for action to happen and for seniors to be safe.

Lorne's daughter is here today because she wants the government to know the full extent of the problem, that there is a crisis in seniors' care that needs to be taken seriously. To the Premier: will he at least recognize that these are not isolated incidents? Will he admit that these problems are widespread and that there is a major crisis in seniors' care in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, the government has acknowledged that we need to make improvements within long-term care for the care that we provide to our residents. Mr. Speaker, that's why, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite will know that the number of residents that had experienced a fall in long-term care was as high as a 56 or 5,800 a year in long-term care through the years that we've gone back to look at — through 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, Mr. Speaker — and that's why the system under the former minister wanted to make this a priority. In 2010 a falls collaborative was put in place, and since that time the number of falls have been reduced by about 25 per cent each and every year. And we're sustaining that, Mr. Speaker, but we know that we need to do more.

Mr. Speaker, this facility itself has seen an over 60 per cent

increase in resources from the Government of Saskatchewan. It has seen increase in full-time equivalent positions. and through the Urgent Issues Action Fund, Mr. Speaker, this facility has received 13 new lifts to help in the repositioning and the transferring of residents, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, when a fall does take place, we know that there are serious consequences when that happens, Mr. Speaker. That's why we take these seriously. That's why, Mr. Speaker, we are investigating through the region, as well as now through the ombudsman, what happened in the situation and why the proper protocols weren't followed when the fall did in fact take place, Mr. Speaker. And those will help to inform us so we can not see these situations in the future.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, sadly we have seen a pattern with incident after incident in location after location in a variety of facilities throughout the province, Mr. Speaker. And we see the government continuing with an approach where there's patting themselves on the back, Mr. Speaker, while there remains a crisis in seniors' care.

My question again, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: will he recognize that these are not isolated incidents, that these are part of a pattern, and that there is a crisis in seniors' care here in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I will say that we are not in this province alone when it comes to jurisdictions across this country that are looking for ways to improve seniors' care for the people that we provide care for, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this government, I would say that there's no patting on the back, Mr. Speaker. I'm simply referring to the actions that we have taken to this point and, Mr. Speaker, I think which shows that the government is serious about this issue, that this is a priority, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that this government would have put in funding in place for the regional health authorities to hire 750 additional full-time equivalent positions into long-term care if we didn't think that it was needed, if we didn't think that, Mr. Speaker, it was needed to address concerns. It's why, Mr. Speaker, that this government did put in place \$10 million in in-year money last year, Mr. Speaker, something I'm not aware had ever been done in terms of the long-term care system.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon Health Region, where this facility is located, received nearly \$2 million for 130 ceiling tracks. It also received \$560,000 for 56 total lifts, Mr. Speaker, as well as dollars for improved staffing levels at a number of facilities.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is no patting on the back. This is our response to these types of issues. We've acknowledged that there's more work to be done. We've acknowledged that there's more training that needs to be done, Mr. Speaker. We are implementing some of that, Mr. Speaker, currently and we will always look to see how we can improve seniors' care in this province.

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

Agreement with Smart Meter Manufacturer

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, we weren't happy with this government's decision to accept a store credit from the failed smart meter manufacturer, but the government repeatedly said that if things don't work out with Sensus, we'll get all of our money back. But in committee last night, SaskPower officials contradicted that. They were clear that we won't get a single cent of that credit back if we choose to go with another manufacturer. They said that with the SaskPower minister sitting right there beside them.

I had a discussion with the acting SaskPower CEO this morning, in which he again confirmed that in almost every scenario, we won't get a single cent back. To the SaskPower minister: how can he explain that?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is developing quite a reputation around this building for coming into this Assembly and presenting half the story. The member also, as we know, as we all know, has attributed statements to people that never happened in this Assembly. In addition to that, now the member opposite wants to take out of context the comments that were made by SaskPower officials in the committee last evening. It's not very fitting for this Assembly, but I'm sure she will press on, Mr. Speaker.

When the agreement was struck in September, Mr. Speaker, the president of SaskPower could not have been more definitive when he said, Mr. Speaker: "If they [Sensus] are not able to produce a meter that's acceptable to SaskPower or independent specifications, they will pay us \$18 million in cash." There was a follow-up question from a reporter, "So you have a deal that outlines that?" And the response from the SaskPower president was "Yes."

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, here's the reality. According to that settlement agreement, SaskPower has to work with Sensus to establish the specifications for the new meter. And the only way we will get any of the \$18 million in credit back is if Sensus fails to meet those technical specifications, the same technical specifications that Sensus is involved in creating. That's the only scenario in which we can walk away from Sensus and get our credit back.

If, on the other hand, Sensus claims they're able to meet the technical specifications but SaskPower deems it a risk to keep working with them and chooses to go with another manufacturer, we'll lose every single penny of that credit. To the SaskPower minister: will he admit that?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, what the agreement outlines is that should SaskPower, through the Sensus situation, if

there is a meter that does not meet the specifications and is independently evaluated by someone like United Underwriters Lab, if that is not the case, Mr. Speaker, then SaskPower would receive all of its money back, Mr. Speaker. If they're able to create a meter that has independent verifications, SaskPower would take a look at using that meter in the future, Mr. Speaker. It would be tested under the most rigorous testing that possibly can be done right here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That is the way the deal was structured, and it is a good deal for the people of our province.

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

Ms. Sproule: — This whole dragging out the truth bit by bit is getting incredibly tiresome. Earlier this session we even had the Premier arguing the SaskPower minister didn't know he was being asked for the full truth so he delivered the truth on a go-forward basis. And even in committee last night we apparently didn't get the full truth yet again.

We have many, many more questions about this smart meter fiasco, and Saskatchewan people deserve answers. So my question's for the Premier. Since we didn't get complete and accurate answers last night, will the government agree to reconvene the Crown and Central Agencies Committee so that the appropriate detailed questions can be asked of the SaskPower minister and his officials?

[14:15]

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, obviously this deal was made with the best of intentions by SaskPower with respect to the taxpayers' dollars. There was \$24 million of cash that was repaid to SaskPower immediately. There was \$18 million at credit, Mr. Speaker. There was \$5 million for research and development of a meter that meets the standards for our province for the difficult climatic conditions that we face here in Saskatchewan. All of the money is being returned to the province of Saskatchewan, which of course is in sharp contrast, Mr. Speaker, to any deal that the NDP [New Democratic Party] have ever struck in this province, Mr. Speaker.

If you look at, if you look at, for example, when this, when the NDP opposite, as an example, Mr. Speaker, as an example, when they decided that they were going to go into the potato business here in Saskatchewan, what did they do? What did they do, Mr. Speaker? They said to the world then, they said to the world that they were going to create an industry here in Saskatchewan. And what did we find out, Mr. Speaker? There was never one NDP potato chip or French fry ever created, and thankfully so.

The Speaker: — You know, when the members ask the question, you would think they would want to hear the response. So please try to restrain yourselves and listen. I recognize the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . That goes for both sides. I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, this is really unbelievable here today. Time and time again, the Premier, the Deputy

Premier, and of course the SaskPower minister have all repeatedly said that if things don't work out, we'll get the 18 million store credit back from Sensus. But now we know that's simply not true. My question to the Premier: why did he say we'd get the money back from Sensus if that's not the case?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, when was asked about this incident, was asked around what would he do differently, what would he do differently if the shoe was on the other foot? And the member opposite was, he's quick to criticize the smart meter program, but once again it's the same old NDP criticism without providing any alternative. What he said, Mr. Speaker, was, those are technical questions that politicians wouldn't be in a position to be directing, Mr. Speaker.

So on one hand, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite says this side of the House should correct this situation. We should be aware of every single part of the deal. And we are, Mr. Speaker: a good deal for the people of Saskatchewan. But when he is asked for an alternative, he ducks and says, we don't provide those because I'm just a politician.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the question was to the Premier. And you know, I think we have to put in context that the guy that's responding is the one that pretended that he wasn't aware of safety issues that we learned he was fully briefed on a full two years ago, Mr. Speaker.

The only way we get money back from this failed manufacturer is if they don't meet the technical specifications that they themselves are helping to establish. This is sort of like paying John Black to help develop a lean project, paying him to pitch himself and then pretending it's an open competition. It's a sham, Mr. Speaker.

To the Premier: will he admit that the only way we get any money back from Sensus is if they can't deliver on the technical specifications they themselves are a part of developing?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, isn't that what we're trying to accomplish here? Isn't that what we're trying to do, is to put in place a meter that meets the needs of the Saskatchewan climatic conditions here in our province? And as a result of the deal that's been put in place, if we are going to use any kind of a meter in the future, it will have to be verified by a third party independent evaluation team like the Underwriters or the Canadian Standards Association, a group like that that would be put in place to evaluate any kind of a meter that would be used in the future. And that is exactly what we have done, Mr. Speaker, with respect to this agreement.

Of course which again, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the member opposite and their team over there in terms of the type of deals that they have structured for the people of Saskatchewan, we'll look at a few more if you like, Mr. Speaker. For example, they lost \$8 million in bingo. How do you possibly lose money in

bingo, Mr. Speaker? You put a prize up, and then you sell tickets to it, and then you have a bingo raffle. Everybody gets an opportunity. It's only the NDP that can lose money in bingo, Mr. Speaker. And then if you look down . . .

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, that government knowingly strapped dangerous meters to the homes of Saskatchewan people and have wasted their money. And now today it's a great big joke? They should be ashamed of themselves, Mr. Speaker.

Let's get this straight. The Sensus 3.2 meters were fire-prone duds, but Sensus promised the government that the 3.3 versions would be so much better, and the government simply believed that. Sensus 3.3 meters turned out to be fire-prone duds, but Sensus promised the government that the next version would be so much better, and if only the government would give them \$5 million and an \$18 million store credit. And again, this government believed them.

And contrary to everything that the Premier and Deputy Premier and the SaskPower minister were saying, we know now that we won't be getting that money back. To the Premier: why wasn't he just upfront with Saskatchewan people? Why won't he put Saskatchewan people first?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, what should be embarrassing in this Assembly is the track record of the members opposite when they were in government. And we'll just go down the list, Mr. Speaker. There's example after example of when they were in charge, of how they handled these types of situations. They lost \$15 million in Channel Lake, a SaskPower . . .

The Speaker: — Order. If I have to, I will start naming names. So please listen to the answers to the questions you asked. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, their track record is one of the complete failure here in the province of Saskatchewan. When they were in charge of SaskPower, they lost an additional \$2 million in a power scheme in Guyana, of all places, Mr. Speaker. Then they took their hand to Chicago and went in with a company called NST Chicago and lost \$16 million in that venture, Mr. Speaker.

Then they decided they'd go over to Newfoundland and take a chance at business there, and they lost an additional \$9.4 million of taxpayers' money. And then they went down to Atlanta, Mr. Speaker. And what happened in Atlanta? They lost \$24.7 million on Retx.com company, Mr. Speaker. In Nashville they lost 6.7. In Clickabid they lost \$3 million . . .

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 171 — *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2014*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and

Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 171, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2014* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General has moved first reading of Bill No. 171, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2014*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 172 — *The Naturopathic Medicine Act*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 172, the naturopathy Act, *The Naturopathic Medicine Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Health has moved first reading of Bill No. 172, *The Naturopathic Medicine Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Chair of the House Services Committee.

Standing Committee on House Services

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on House Services to report that it has considered certain supplementary estimates and to present its 10th report. I move:

That the 10th report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Elphinstone has moved:

That the 10th report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Mr. Lawrence: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report that it has been, that it has considered certain supplementary estimates to present its sixth report. I move:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Human Services be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Human Services be now concurred in.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report that it has considered certain supplementary estimates and to present its seventh report. I move:

That the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice:

That the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice be now concurred in.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

I recognize the chairman of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report that it has considered certain supplementary estimates and to present its sixth report. I move:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies be now concurred in.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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 14:29 until 14:59.]

The Speaker: — On the motion moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies, motion reads:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies be now concurred in.

All those in favour please rise.

[Yeas — 46]

Wall	Morgan	Stewart
Wyant	Duncan	Krawetz
Boyd	Eagles	McMorris
Reiter	Toth	Huyghebaert
Doherty	Moe	Docherty
Campeau	Heppner	Cheveldayoff
Harrison	Tell	Ottenbreit
Norris	Hart	Kirsch
Bjornerud	Brkich	Makowsky

Weekes	Cox	Draude
Wilson	Marchuk	Ross
Bradshaw	Michelson	Merriman
Hutchinson	Young	Jurgens
Steinley	Hickie	Lawrence
Tochor	Parent	Phillips
Doke		

The Speaker: — All those opposed please rise.

[Nays — 9]

Brotten	Forbes	Wotherspoon
Vermette	Belanger	Chartier
McCall	Nilson	Sproule

Principal Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the motion, 46; those opposed, 9.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I ask for leave to introduce a motion regarding the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has asked for a leave to introduce a motion regarding the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

MOTIONS

Reappointment of Conflict of Interest Commissioner

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move:

That the Hon. Ronald Barclay, Q.C., of the city of Regina in the province of Saskatchewan, be reappointed to a second term as the Conflict of Interest Commissioner pursuant to section 18 of *The Members' Conflict of Interest Act*.

I so move.

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

That the Hon. Ronald Barclay, Q.C., of the city of Regina in the province of Saskatchewan, be reappointed to a second term as Conflict of Interest Commissioner pursuant to section 18 of *The Members' Conflict of Interest Act*.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answers to questions 528 through 551.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has ordered responses to questions 528 to 551.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Principal Clerk: — Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — Committee of Finance. I do now leave the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE**Motions for Supply**

The Chair: — The committee will commence. The business before the committee is the resolution. I call on the Minister of Finance to move his resolution.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would like to move the following resolution:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015, the sum of \$157,479,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

I so move.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that resolution no. 1:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015, the sum of \$157,479,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that the committee rise and that the Chair report that the committee has agreed to a certain resolution and ask for leave to sit again.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that the committee rise and that the Chair report that the committee has agreed to certain resolutions and ask for leave to sit again. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of committees.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that the committee rise and that the Chair report that the committee has agreed to certain resolutions and ask for leave to sit again.

The Speaker: — When shall the resolutions be read the first time? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

FIRST AND SECOND READINGS OF RESOLUTIONS

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — I move that the resolution be now read the first and second time.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — First and second reading of the resolution.

The Speaker: — When shall the committee sit again?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Later this day, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Later this day. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

APPROPRIATION BILL**Bill No. 173 — *The Appropriation Act, 2014 (No. 2)***

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 173, *The Appropriation Act, 2014 (No. 2)* be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Finance has moved that Bill No. 173, *The Appropriation Act, 2014 (No. 2)* be now introduced and read the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — By leave of the Assembly and under rule 32(1)(e), I move that the bill be now read a second and third time.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. Leave has been granted. It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 173, *The Appropriation Act, 2014 (No. 2)* be now read a second and third time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — Second and third reading of this bill.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 170 — *The Fire Safety Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 170, *The Fire Safety Act*. This bill, if passed, will replace *The Fire Prevention Act, 1992* and update the powers and responsibilities of local fire services and the provincial fire service.

This bill will accomplish this by doing three things. First, in replacing the current Act with the new Act, it will update powers, definitions, and other terminology to better reflect the current realities and requirements of the full scope of modern fire departments, and better support fire safety and response across the province.

Second, it will provide local authorities, their firefighters and fire inspectors with more transparent rules regarding entry in situations involving fire, along with additional measures to prevent the risks of fires and other emergencies.

And third, the new Act will provide the province, through the fire commissioner, with clear authority and greater ability to assist and support communities and local fire departments when requested or required by a fire situation or emergency event.

I will briefly expand on how the new Act achieves these objectives. The current fire prevention Act, 1992 is dated. While local and provincial fire responsibilities have changed considerably over time, there has been very little in the way of amendments to the current Act since it came into force over 20 years ago. For example as we have seen in recent months, fire departments now respond to industrial accidents, train derailments, flooding, hazardous materials spills, and other emergencies. They provide fire code and other bylaw enforcement, search and rescue services, fire prevention awareness, and general public safety education.

The proposed new Act will first and foremost update the province's fire safety legislation to be current with everyday fire and emergency response services, with advances in

technology and with best practices such as incident command structures. It will recognize in its definitions of firefighter and fire safety services that today's fire departments do more than put out fires. They provide the broad range of services and respond to the wide range of situations that I just mentioned. This will ensure that powers and liability protection extend to all of these roles and situations.

In terms of liability protection, the new Act will make it clear that municipalities, fire departments, and all fire personnel, including volunteers, are legally protected whenever responding to a fire or emergency, including ones that are outside of their community. This is important for municipalities and their fire departments when aiding another community, when responding to non-fire emergencies, or when acting to prevent a fire or a risk. Similarly this protection will extend to the provincial fire commissioner, his or her deputies and provincial inspectors, and it will extend to any fire department called upon by the province to assist in a situation requiring a provincial response.

The second key area of improvements in the new Act provides municipalities and local fire services with more transparent rules regarding entry in situations involving fire, along with additional measures to prevent the risk of fire and emergencies. Specifically the proposed new Act will authorize actions to prevent and address the imminent risk of fire or an emergency. The current Act focuses almost entirely on putting out fires and very little on preventing fires. As a result it does not provide adequate authority to firefighters to take pre-emptive measures that protect persons, property, or the environment from potential harm or danger. The new Act will explicitly authorize such measures.

The proposed new Act will also provide the ability to inspect places open to the public without notice or warrant to better deal with situations such as overcrowding and hazardous materials. However, it will provide clear direction that a warrant or consent is required when entering private residential property for inspection or investigation purposes. This balances protection of public safety with the rights of property owners.

The new fire safety Act will allow municipalities to register fire safety orders on land titles. This is something the municipal sector has requested to assist in compelling property owners to comply with these orders and to improve transparency for potential property buyers that a fire safety order is outstanding.

The new Act will also allow municipalities to pass bylaws that exceed the minimum requirements of the National Fire Code. This was also requested by the municipal sector, particularly the cities, to establish standards beyond those in the code that they feel are necessary for the health, safety, and welfare of residents. However, these bylaws cannot conflict with the National Fire Code without provincial approval. This ensures the province can modify and adapt provisions of the code by regulation to establish province-wide standards.

[15:15]

The proposed new Act maintains the autonomy municipalities currently have to pass bylaws regarding fire service levels and any other fire safety and prevention matters. Most importantly, it maintains the autonomy municipalities currently have to

decide what fire services they will provide and how best to provide them. Whether volunteer or paid departments or shared services and mutual aid agreements with other municipalities and First Nations, the new Act ensures these are accommodated and not limited in any way by legislation. In fact, the new Act will better facilitate inclusion of First Nations, regional entities, and private industry in fire service agreements and arrangements to encourage area and intercommunity co-operation.

While the new Act does not change the autonomy of local authorities regarding the fire services that they provide, it will introduce requirements for municipalities to report locally and provincially on the fire services available in their community. This is intended to inform residents, property owners, neighbouring communities, and the provinces of these services in order to improve accountability, mutual aid, and provincial support.

For the province, this information will help the ministry identify situations where it may need to advise, assist, or respond. It will also help the fire commissioner identify training or programming supports to improve local and area capacity. The new Act will provide other benefits to the province, and this is the last key area of changes I will speak on.

Mr. Speaker, for the province, *The Fire Safety Act* will provide clear authority to assist and support communities dealing with fires and related emergencies, not all fires but those that constitute a significant threat to public safety in which local fire response capacity is overwhelmed or non-existent. This is not clearly provided for under existing legislation.

Local authorities and local fire services often request the province to assist or to take on a larger role when they do not have the capacity to adequately respond to a fire or other emergency event. The new Act will give the province clear authority to provide this assistance, such as equipment and resources, if a fire situation or other emergency requires this. It will also give the province the authority to coordinate the response of various fire and emergency services or to call in resources from other parts of the province. I want to emphasize that the new Act requires this be done in consultation and collaboration with local authorities. These provisions were developed with considerable consultation and collaboration with municipal and public safety stakeholders.

Finally, for the province this bill will broaden the ability of the fire commissioner to advise on and recommend improvements to local fire services, whether volunteer or professional. It will allow for training guidelines and other programming to be developed to address gaps in firefighter capabilities and to support persons conducting fire investigations and inspections.

Mr. Speaker, numerous meetings, presentations, and consultations with municipal and public safety sector stakeholders and associations have occurred between 2006 and the present to discuss and draft new fire safety legislation. This has involved elected municipal officials, municipal administrators and city managers, volunteer and professional firefighters, fire chiefs and fire inspectors, city solicitors, and other legal counsel.

Stakeholders support the direction of the new legislation, particularly that it reflects the current realities and situations local fire departments deal with while retaining local autonomy to decide the level and type of fire services provided to residents. I want to thank all who have contributed to the development of this draft legislation over the last past number of years for their involvement, their patience, and their suggestions for improvements.

In closing, the proposed new fire safety Act will better support municipalities and their local fire departments to respond to fire and emergency situations and risks. It will protect firefighters and improve public awareness of the fire safety services in their communities. And it will better enable the province and the ministry, through the fire commissioner, to help local authorities develop stronger fire safety services and better response capacity. And so, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 170, *The Fire Safety Act*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The minister has moved second reading of Bill No. 170, *The Fire Safety Act*. 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 today to give the initial first comments on the bill that was just introduced, Bill 170, *The Fire Safety Act*, Mr. Speaker. And just a note that the bill itself talks about *The Fire Prevention Act* and actually taking the old Act and replacing it with a new one, a totally new Act. And it's nice to be able to listen to the minister give some explanatory notes as to the focus and the intent of the new Act. And, Mr. Speaker, certainly the notes and the information that he presented a while ago certainly does give us some indication as to what the province is planning when it comes to *The Fire Safety Act* that they're proposing through Bill 170.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that's really important for us as the opposition is to really see what bills are being brought forward and what's the components of the bills and where some of the bills may be lacking. And certainly, as I mentioned with a number of the other bills, we want to make sure that there's been good consultation. And we would encourage those people that are involved with the delivery of services such as fire prevention and fire preparedness, and of course to respond to the emergencies associated with fires, Mr. Speaker, because obviously this is something that has to get some very serious focus on and something that we need a lot of partners involved with.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk briefly about some of the partners and some of the discussions that we have had over time with a number of organizations such as the professional firefighters associations, some local mayors and chiefs, and of course some of the people, the front-line workers that provide volunteer services for the fire services and fire departments throughout our province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what's really, really important is that there's a couple of new twists and turns in this particular bill apart from the old bill. First of all, section 11 of this bill allows for the creation of fire chiefs in provincial and regional parks, a provision that did not exist in the old Act, Mr. Speaker. We obviously need information on that as to what the intent there

is. Because obviously we don't want to assume that all the fire protection Act guidelines and intent with this bill applies to as many areas and regions as possible, and parks are a big part of our province. So we just need to get some basic information as to who was consulted on that front.

Again, the Professional Fire Fighters of Saskatchewan, as I mentioned earlier, they've raised a number of issues during their lobby day. A very informative group, very well-organized group, very articulate group, Mr. Speaker, and we think at the outset we need to compare the notes of the professional firefighters and also what the minister just basically explained to see whether it's collaboration and corroboration on some of the issues that they've raised.

And right at the outset, Mr. Speaker, we see there's a lot of gaps there as well. We need to be able to identify those gaps and try and do justice to the Professional Fire Fighters Association in terms of recognizing and raising the issues that they feel this government has been ignoring. And there are many examples that they have shared with us.

Mr. Speaker, the other section that does give us some concern is 51(e) in a sense that the bill gives cabinet many more powers to create regulations and provide exemptions for almost any provision of the Act. So here we have a minister talking about the importance of preparedness, the importance of awareness, the importance of providing good quality service, highly trained professional people. And then towards the end of the Act it basically, the minister says well, well I'm also giving powers to the cabinet to do what they want and to exempt many organizations and people from following this Act. So it's kind of counterproductive, Mr. Speaker, and that's one of the things we want to touch on about today as well.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a bit about the, you know, all the firefighting resources that many of our First Nations people struggle with. I think that's really important because one of the notes that I made earlier is that we are now looking at provincial and regional parks being included in the Act, so obviously you want to see what other parts of Saskatchewan that may be underserved and many First Nations communities are underserved.

We would hope, and we were hoping, that there would be some collaboration and discussion on that front, on certainly as a really critical part of this bill. Mr. Speaker, we don't see any evidence of that whatsoever. And while the minister did make reference to First Nations partners, there was no real discussion as to what that partnership might entail and what the partnership might look like.

Certainly again from this bill, Bill 170, there's also the notes indicating that they wanted to update the fire safety regulations. They want to provide local authority with more rules and obviously some of the things that are very basic, Mr. Speaker, is that the regulations need to be more modern. The language needs to be more modernized, Mr. Speaker.

And we need to take into account some of the flooding challenges and the train derailments or the industrial fires that many of our local firefighters are dealing with because it is a changing environment. It is a changing world. So we need to

incorporate all those particular aspects to the bill as we move forward to come up with the proper legislation to ensure that we prepare our firefighters. And we understand that some of the roles and responsibilities have dramatically changed and altered over time.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the minister spoke briefly about liability protection. Obviously it's important for local firemen and fire chiefs and the fire department themselves to be protected because obviously they are providing a service, and it is a protective service. So if something were to go wrong, which we all hope and pray it doesn't happen, that there is some protection from, you know, from the liability or from a lawsuit for many of our local volunteer firefighters that go out there at great risk to themselves and possible harm to themselves, and yet they're trying to do their very best under certain circumstances. And there may be occasion where a problem may exist totally beyond their doing and could result in some legal action. And, Mr. Speaker, it's important that we protect the firefighters on that front.

So there's a wide variety of issues that the minister spoke about. He spoke about the need to modernize the language, modernize the regulation, the need to increase our presence at the regional parks or provincial parks. Spoke about some of the rules and regulations that have changed, the importance of liability protection, of training, of bringing in new regulations, of preparing for flooding, derailments, and of course, large industrial fires. These are some of the things that we obviously have to really pay close attention to as a government and as an opposition, and certainly the information that we received just a few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to be able to have those discussions, but we need the detail.

We need to know what exactly is involved with the new rules and regulations. Are there going to be resources available to train some of the local firefighters or the volunteer firefighters throughout Saskatchewan when it comes to derailment of combustible goods? As we all know, there's a lot more oil and gas that's being transported by rail, in particular oil, Mr. Speaker. And we see the volume of railcars being used now for the transportation of oil, so it is certainly creating risks to a lot of communities when you convert that from a pipeline to rail. And, Mr. Speaker, we've had examples of that.

And I'm not certain who would be the responsible party to ensure a lot of the communities along these train tracks or these train routes that they're properly prepared in the event that there is a derailment, that there is potential for fire or potential for a large environmental catastrophe, that the local fire department are prepared, and they know what needs to happen. We need to clarify that from the discussions and observing the Act as to who is responsible for that training. Who's responsible for paying for that training, and how are you going to qualify and to verify that the training is in place for all the different departments that may be impacted by the train derailment possibility?

So we need those discussions, Mr. Speaker. How many communities are being impacted by this, in the sense of how many communities actually live along the rail system that would require this training? Are there any costs attached to that? We need to find this information out and find it out fairly

soon.

And obviously SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] would have some of the information but, Mr. Speaker, we need certainly some concentration on those particular communities that live along the rail service. And those rail services, if they are indeed transporting oil through some of these communities, then these communities have every right to know that it's happening. And they also have to make sure that their local fire department is trained. So there's a lot of questions that we have in this regard and, Mr. Speaker, it is important.

It is important that we know that the trained people that are out there, ready to respond to an emergency will certainly give the provincial government and certainly the opposition a peace of mind knowing that our firefighters, volunteer or paid, are really updated in terms of their ability to fight a wide variety of new fires in this day and age. And those of course could include large industrial fires, include things like train derailment fires, and so on and so forth.

[15:30]

So it is important that we identify which communities are at risk, the preparation or preparedness of each of the local departments. How well are they funded? How good is their equipment? How good is their technical knowledge of what they're fighting? If we do a thorough assessment of all those particular departments that live along our rail system, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be great justice to them all if we really done a thorough, comprehensive study of how these communities are prepared and how they're financed, if they're financed well, and see if there's any particular area that's lacking. So their community and especially themselves do not become, are not put at risk because of poor training, poor equipment, or being under-resourced in any way, shape, or form.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is something that's really important that we understand and hear from the concerned parties. Obviously as I mentioned, SUMA and SARM would be key players in determining the challenge with that. We need to see some of the documentation and some of the information and the correspondence that may have been shared with the government from both of these entities because they are, quite frankly, the municipal leaders of our province and they're a great source of advice, a great partner to the Government of Saskatchewan with, and certainly, Mr. Speaker, they could give us some very, very good preliminary advice on how to make this fire Act or fire safety Act a lot stronger, a lot more relevant, and of course a lot more effective.

So I would really encourage the continued dialogue with SUMA and SARM and other organizations that are out there, Mr. Speaker. It is important that we prepare them and work closely with them in the event that there is a catastrophe by way of a train derailment or some flooding or a large industrial firm. We think that it's appropriate that we do this and that we need to make sure that they're all prepared.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the bill, as I indicated, we looked through

the bill fairly thoroughly and there's a number of things that are lacking and missing, Mr. Speaker. And I want to make particular note of one typo on the very first page of the Bill 170 where it says part II. Underneath there's a typo in the sense of the letter "d" is missing from the administration title. And one of the things that we thought at the outset that we know that there are things lacking in the bill itself and because of the typo it really caught our attention in the sense that, what else is missing in terms of the actual bill itself?

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a bit about our First Nations partners in the province of Saskatchewan. As we all know, there has been some very difficult challenges and times for many of the First Nations communities. They have always decried the fact that they are in need of some very good support from a number of organizations to understand exactly the plight and the danger and the threat that many First Nations communities face in our province because they are under-resourced in the sense of needing more and more support dollars for fire preparedness, fire prevention, and of course to be ready to respond to emergency situations.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to share with the Assembly and with many of the people that are listening, a letter that was written to the Prime Minister a number of months ago. And this is where we spoke about the incredible risk and the incredible challenge that many First Nations in our community find themselves in when we talk about *The Fire Safety Act*, Mr. Speaker.

There is passing reference made to First Nations by the minister. We cannot no longer tolerate the passing reference to First Nations. We have to make sure that there is a concise plan, a real, true engagement with our First Nations leaders to ensure that fire safety, fire preparedness, and to minimize the loss of life in any part of the corner of Saskatchewan is something that shouldn't be tolerated and something that needs your total concentration. So I go back to the typo on the first page where the letter "d" is missing. I hope that doesn't represent the number of the other areas that we think are missing in the bill that it was that the minister was mistaken to not include that "d" in the typo but is also mistaken in not including First Nations protection in this provincial bill which I think that they would welcome and they would support if there was certain, if there's incentive and there's good collaboration and partnership to reduce harm or potential harm to many of our First Nations families throughout the province.

So if we're going to have the new Act come along and they're going to have some new inclusions of powers for the cabinet, if they're going to have some new inclusions for regional and provincial parks, Mr. Speaker, I dare say that they should also have inclusion on First Nations efforts at trying to strengthen their local firefighting and fire departments overall so that they can train with our local firefighters. They can train with the Fire Commissioner's office. They could ramp up their ability to respond to a local fire. And the list goes on as to all the technical, legal, and financial advice that many First Nations fire departments need, Mr. Speaker, because obviously it is a crisis situation and we can no longer simply make passing reference to First Nations when it comes to protecting their particular families from the ravages of a home fire or future challenges when it comes to firefighting overall.

I want to read for the record, Mr. Speaker, a letter sent to the Prime Minister of Canada. And the letter reads:

Dear Prime Minister,

On March 2, 2014, Iesha Rabbitskin, age 10, died in a house fire on Witchekan Lake First Nation, 125 kilometres northwest of Prince Albert. The full circumstances of this fire and the subsequent response to it are under investigation.

In January of 2014, Solomon Ballantyne, age 10, and Josiah Ballantyne, age 9, died in a house fire on the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation in northeastern Saskatchewan. The fire truck would not start, so efforts to fight the fire and save these children were hampered.

Less than six months ago, in September 2013, Denasia Highway, age 10, perished in a house fire in Pelican Narrows, a member community of Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation. This young girl died after going back inside the house to ensure that her great-grandfather was no longer inside the burning building.

We know, from a study commissioned by your government, that people living in First Nations communities are 10 times more likely to die in a house fire than people in the rest of Canada. This is unacceptable and it has to stop.

The federal government needs to increase its funding to help First Nations get the training and equipment needed to effectively save lives and fight fires in their communities. The current program for on-reserve fire protection, prevention and suppression is inadequate.

I respectfully ask that your government urgently fix the current program and provide this funding.

Sincerely,

Cam Broten
Leader of the Official Opposition

And Mr. Speaker, the letter was cc'd to Chief Peter Beatty of the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation; Chief Steven Jim of the Witchekan Lake First Nation; the Hon. Thomas Mulcair, MP [Member of Parliament] and Leader of Canada's Official Opposition; Jean Crowder, MP, the critic for Aboriginal Affairs; myself, the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Athabasca; and Mr. Vermette, the MLA for Cumberland.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member is a veteran member, and I would like to remind him not to use the names of the members in the House. I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I was merely reading the letter and all that received the cc. The bottom of the letter, it identified which individuals received the cc of the letter, and that was part of the letter that I was reading. So it's a quote

from a document in which I made reference to the member from Cumberland.

So I think it's important to note that this particular letter that we engaged is something that needs to be incorporated. And the memories of the young children that perished in some of these fires, that were a short period of time, must not be forgotten.

So the First Nations communities themselves, they obviously need some greater focus on providing supports for their fire departments. And there's none other greater support than senior governments to be able to provide that support under the direction and guidance of First Nations leaders. We could really do our part to ensure that First Nations families and communities have adequate fire protection in their communities so they are able to respond to some of these fires. It is a situation that needs our attention.

And, Mr. Speaker, the particular bill that we're dealing with obviously spoke a bit about First Nations partners, but Bill 170 needs to go much deeper than that to ensure that we have some good collaboration and corroboration with the First Nations leaders to talk about how we as a province can engage many First Nations on thoughtful dialogue as to how we could prepare them in the future so we don't have tragic events that were identified in the letter occurring anymore on First Nations land. There's simply no reason to allow that to continue, Mr. Speaker.

So this is the point where I think as legislators we would encourage people to look at that option. We would encourage the minister and the government with all their resources, the provincial government to not simply sit on their hands and say, well they are a federal matter; we can't engage. There's got to be ways and means in which we could engage to ensure that we provide as much technical supports and advice and preventative advice and just generally advice overall.

And when we engage with the First Nations leaders as to how we can, from the provincial perspective, we could assist in making sure some of these communities are better prepared and certainly are able to respond in a situation, where they're able to embark on an awareness campaign to deal with the schools as well, to look at home inspections opportunities, just to reduce the threat of fires, Mr. Speaker.

So this is what's really, really important is that there's ways and means in which this particular Act could really incorporate a First Nations perspective as we are bringing in new areas that have been under-served in the past, which include provincial parks and regional parks.

So I think there needs to be a good compelling argument as well for the First Nations communities in the sense that they should be engaged with this process because obviously the more firefighters that are trained, the more fire departments that are prepared, and also they are trained and prepared in the most modern language in the most modern way would certainly support a lot of calls for people in First Nations communities to make sure their fire departments are up to snuff and that they're able to respond to fires that claim so many lives of young children.

And that letter I wanted to read into record. And I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that there's that concentrated effort by the minister and by the Saskatchewan Party government to be inclusive, to be engaging, and to make sure that they're also effectively supporting and recognizing First Nations when it comes to firefighting services.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we had the privilege of sitting with the Saskatchewan Professional Fire Fighters Association, and many members of the firefighting association spoke highly of the need to be engaged with not only training and preparedness at their local level but, Mr. Speaker, they also talked about engaging the First Nations communities. And while some of the professional fire fighters want to go above and beyond their role, they really take their role seriously, Mr. Speaker.

The firefighters have obviously . . . very dedicated to their job. They have gone through a lot of training. They continue remaining to be in very good physical shape, Mr. Speaker, because obviously it's a very physically demanding job, and they're always alert. They're always ready, and they're always prepared to do what they have to do to save lives and save property and of course to serve their community.

So a lot of the professional firefighters that we sat with, they spoke about a host of issues that were really, really important. And one cannot but admire, Mr. Speaker, their dedication to their job and certainly the fact that they want to do their job so well and that they don't want to have a loss of life or nor do they want a loss of property on their watch. So they're really dedicated, and they are prepared. And, Mr. Speaker, they will continue holding that torch quite high in the sense that this is a duty for them, and they've done so many things that are above and beyond their duty, Mr. Speaker. It is always good to be able to honour the Saskatchewan professional firefighters and their association and their members for doing a lot of great work.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the firefighters association brought up a number of issues that were important. And I want to say that they made a great connect with the opposition, and I'm sure they also connected with the government in the sense of making . . . They certainly encouraged a lot of First Nations participation. They were aware of the deaths, you know, and they were also aware of the incredible challenge that many of the fire departments find themselves in on First Nations land.

[15:45]

So they know that they could help. They know that they could offer good advice. They know they can offer good technical advice and training. They can do a lot to engage the First Nations community, and they're just more than willing. They're more than willing to do their part and to reach out so that from their perspective and from their point, they're saying a loss of life in any part of Saskatchewan is unacceptable and that we need to do all we can to prepare every single department, on-reserve or non-reserve, to be able to protect children and families and property, Mr. Speaker.

And that's what's really important is that they are dedicated to a point where they're not just concerned with their own local needs, that they look at this as a province-wide effort. And certainly the Professional Fire Fighters Association are more

than willing to engage, more than willing to share the information they have and in any way, shape, or form more than willing to help.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Professional Fire Fighters Association brought a number of issues forward. You know, they talk about the number of challenges that their association finds, Mr. Speaker. They've been very, very respectful in their dialogue with the opposition. They have not been disrespectful to any other party.

So they have made a number of recommendations, Mr. Speaker, a number of issues that they have had and will continue bringing forward on behalf of their members. And the documentation that I have in front of me, Mr. Speaker, talks about those issues.

And I can remember having a number of discussions with the firefighters over time. And a lot of people may not know this, but when we talk about great risk to the firefighters themselves, at the local level, there is great risk, Mr. Speaker, because they have been saying something that the minister just woke up to today. When you talk about a new fire Act is that they're . . . It's a modern world. And to be able to fight large industrial fires, to be able to fight train fires, Mr. Speaker, or to be able to deal with some of the massive challenges that many communities find themselves under, whether it's natural flooding as the example that I would use and, you know, they have used, we count on these firefighters to come to our aid. We count on the people that are there to help us deal with the crisis because many times the average person is not trained, is not properly equipped to deal with the crisis. So we count on these firefighters, Mr. Speaker.

And it's amazing. It's actually amazing what the firefighters themselves are subjected to. When we talk about an example I would use, Mr. Speaker, and we talk about a large industrial fire, we don't know what chemicals exist in that particular building. But the firefighters are there for one specific reason is to control the blaze so it's not threatening to light other property and to protect human lives. And at the end of the day, the firefighters are the ones that go into these buildings. The firefighters are the ones that get subjected to many of the chemicals that may be burning in these particular buildings. They get subjected to the reaction of fire with different building products, Mr. Speaker.

So what's happening is you're finding over time that more and more and more firefighters are dealing with a wide variety of ailments, Mr. Speaker, whether it's just injury, you know, as a result of them fighting a fire, or the more serious threat to our firefighters' health is the different cancers that could occur as a result of the firefighters, the professional firefighters . . . that they're being exposed to.

And over time, Mr. Speaker, over time, there has been some incredible stories of how firefighters have done their service, have subjected their bodies to gruelling training, and then they enter a fire that has some chemicals or the combustion of different chemicals create an incredibly dire threat to their health.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they don't try and dissect what kind of fire

they're fighting. Obviously they do this on a large scale, but in terms of the minute details of what chemical is in one corner, what chemical is in the other corner, they don't do a thorough enough analysis on all that. They just go there and fight the fire and they are subjected to all the different dangers that may occur as a result of chemicals burning.

And what we're finding now, Mr. Speaker, is that many of those firefighters, over time, you get subjected to that, and as they age, many of the cancers begin to show up. And this is a direct link to the job that they've done, a direct link to the chemical fires that they may have fought, a direct link to some of the by-products of buildings that are burning.

Mr. Speaker, there's no question that the evidence has shown that the firefighters themselves are subjected on a continual basis to these kind of dangerous noxious fumes that sometimes result in a wide variety of cancers, everything from pancreatic cancer to lung cancer to bladder cancer, Mr. Speaker. The list goes on as to the type of cancers that could be sparked as a result of some of the activity that a fireman is involved with, Mr. Speaker.

So it's really, really important that the most compelling argument that the Professional Fire Fighters Association have presented time and time again is the risk and the threat to many of their member firefighters. It's greater than the average person. And yet through it all, Mr. Speaker, they have remained professional in their job, dedicated to ensuring they protect lives and protect property to the best of their ability, Mr. Speaker. But when we need them, that's important to note that senior governments need them as well, so it's important to talk about the Professional Fire Fighters Association today because we want to make sure we take every opportunity to recognize the challenge they have and some of the issues that they have raised.

Now, Mr. Speaker, some of the other issues that they're talking about when we see what they're doing out there is to also treat them fairly. We know that some of the issues are around the proper complement of manpower. This is really important, you know, being treated fairly in the sense of salaries. We obviously know that many, many communities have different ways of dealing the local fire protective services, Mr. Speaker. Well we need to make sure that all the firefighters throughout Saskatchewan are treated fairly, and that certainly means benefits, health coverage, and of course salaries as well, Mr. Speaker.

These are things that just need to be aired in a sense that fairness is key. And we didn't make any . . . We didn't see any reference in this Bill 170 to speaking of the value and the threat and the dangers that many of our firefighters find themselves in on a regular basis, and we need to incorporate some of those issues when we talk about the fire Act itself.

Because Bill 170, like I mentioned at the outset, they have a "d" missing in one of the first words in the bill. But there's many other things that are missing and that includes, as I mentioned, due acknowledgment of what the professional firefighters are going through. It means to respect the challenge and the risk they face to their health. And it also means that you have to be prepared from the government perspective to do all you can to

protect these crucial people that attend fires in our communities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also want to touch a bit about the communities themselves. When you look at the number of the communities all throughout the province of Saskatchewan, have we done a thorough analysis? Like some of the communities do have larger fire departments, and they do have regular training. But how about the smaller communities, the hamlets, the villages, you know, the resort communities? How are they prepared? Have we done a thorough analysis of their role as well?

I know that SUMA has had these discussions as well as SARM, but we need to know how many communities out there that are not prepared. We don't have that information. It's important to note that in order for us to be able to put a new Act in front of the Assembly today, we should have some of the most basic information as to say, okay, because we have a new Act that's replacing an old Act and that there's no accompanying notes that talk about the issues that I think need to be included in this report, and that one of them of course includes to do a thorough assessment of what kind of preparedness model do we have in the smallest of our communities and the largest of our communities on First Nations land, Mr. Speaker, and of course to treat our firefighters well.

So there's a large, large area that has been omitted from the bill. We need some of that information and we need some of that collaboration from those groups to be able to determine if the bill meets the criteria which the minister alluded to in the sense of it's a priority for them. But it was one thing to say priority, Mr. Speaker, but it's certainly another thing from our perspective when you see the performance to meet the priority of, you know, of this government. They have continually shown that they've under-resourced crucial areas like firefighting protection, and they have not followed through and been thorough enough in their legislation to make sure they do justice to Acts of this sort.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of issues that we can and will speak about. And as I travel from the small northern . . . or from different northern communities, Mr. Speaker, I always ask questions about the fire departments in some of our communities.

And I can remember when I served as the mayor of my home community of Ile-a-la-Crosse that we often had meetings with the fire department. And it took a lot of work. It took a lot of preparedness, you know, with the crew that was in there. And we'd meet with them on a regular basis just to find out if there's something that they needed because we understood that they were underserved and that certainly that there was risk to families within the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse. So you know, it's actually an amazing thing to watch as some of the volunteer firefighters that are out there, they are really, truly dedicated to their job. It's not just a volunteer thing that they go to a meeting once a month.

In the event that there is a fire in the community, they know what to do. They're immediately there to respond. And there are many, many examples I can share with you, not just in my home community, but the number of neighbouring communities in my area in which they are very serious about providing

top-quality fire protection services to their local fire brigade, Mr. Speaker.

So that's something that I think we need to continue focusing on and to always be vigilant in the sense of ensuring that the local councils know that this is important. That's why there's a bit of interest that we spoke or the minister spoke about providing the local authority with more clearer rules, more definitive rules on how you can engage and support your local fire department. It's important to know what those rules are.

So it's one thing, Mr. Speaker, to be critical of those that may not be prepared as best as they should be. But, Mr. Speaker, we can't simply point fingers from the distance. We have to be engaging, we have to be upfront, and we also have to resource some of these communities.

And that's the important message I would certainly want to share on behalf of some of the small northern communities in northern Saskatchewan: to do a good, thorough assessment of what's there and what they're able to fight, and how they will be able to prepare in the event that there is a fire. And much more so, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the promise made by the, you know, by the minister in the sense of saying, it's not just about fighting fires and being prepared and being aware and being fire smart and being pre-emptive in a sense of teaching people what to watch out for.

Mr. Speaker, we think that this is a whole new ball game when you look at the preventative aspect of it. There's so much more that could be done. None of the issues had been raised, you know, in the bill itself. It's just been sporadic in the sense of naming First Nations as partners, talking about engaging or involving fire chiefs at the regional or provincial park level. It talks about powers for the cabinet.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's a lot of different areas the minister spoke about, but we need more definitive ideas, more definitive examples of how they're going to make a difference for many of these local fire departments that are out there. Whether they're on First Nations land or whether they're in a small northern community or whether in a small hamlet between two large centres in the South, wherever they may be, Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that they are prepared as best they can, and they have best practices and the best information and the best protection of their workers, so in the event that there is a fire, then they know what to do and that they know that we have their back as they have the backs of many of our families that may be threatened by fire.

So the bill itself has a lot of issues that we want to talk about. There's much more that I wish to share in the sense of the northern perspective, Mr. Speaker. I know that when we have a fire threatening some of the northern communities, and there's a number of examples — Black Lake, Stony Rapids — over the last number of years, when we wouldn't mind clarifying the rules through this particular Act as to how we would interact and work with the federal government on issues such as evacuations of some of the communities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is what's really, really important. Many of the leaders in some of these northern communities, they have a very difficult time. They've got a very difficult time in

determining whether they want to evacuate people or not evacuate. It's such a tough call for many northern leaders. So the net effect is that when there is a fire threat to a community, there was a lot of discussion around, well what is it more viable to do, to have the proper resourcing to fight the fire that threatens the community or to remove the community from the fire's path?

Now, Mr. Speaker, what we have to do is really start to determine who has that authority and who makes those decisions. And the reason I say that, Mr. Speaker, is that there's many examples that I'll share with you as to why that's an issue, is that I understand that if you do not fight the fire, then the provincial government who has the responsibility of fighting fires in northern Saskatchewan may or may not fight that fire. There could be a different number of factors. I think those discussions and those decisions are made out of Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker. So the net effect is that, who makes the determination to fight this fire or not?

[16:00]

Now I understand that if there is a large-scale evacuation of a threatened community, and it is a First Nations community, then I'm assuming that the federal government would pay the bill, so to speak, of not only transporting people out of harm's way but the accommodation and the services that are required to take care of these evacuated people in a more southern community such as Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker.

I've visited a few evacuation sites in Prince Albert and it's very, very difficult on the elders. Many times they're housed in arenas or larger buildings. Some of them are housed depending on their ailment because some of the older people cannot sleep on cots. There's a number of issues, health issues, that they have to deal with. So it's a combination of the majority staying in a central evacuation site and, of course, some that need proper beds get put up in the different hotels, Mr. Speaker. So it's not as if it's being abused in any way, shape, or form. It is a huge, huge undertaking and, Mr. Speaker, it's also a huge challenge for many of the elders to be moved from their northern homes to be placed in Prince Albert for a week to 10 days at a time, and it creates all kinds of challenges for them as well.

So one of the points that I was made aware of when I did travel to one of the evacuation sites is many of them wanted to go home as quickly as possible. Some of them don't like where they're staying because obviously you want to stay in your own bed. Some of them had issues around their health, that they're quite worried about their health in the city. Others just simply wanted to be able, to be able to sleep in their own bed, Mr. Speaker, so there's always the longing to go home.

There's always a longing to be back in your own house and this is kind of where I think a lot of elders, they ended up getting sick because they don't sleep well. They constantly worry. It does have an effect on their health. And some of them mentioned this is the second or third time over a period of time in which they were evacuated from their home community and that they had to be staying in the city for a long period of time and it does have a dramatic negative effect on them. So there's always the questions of, when do we go home? Why were we

evacuated? Why didn't they fight the fire instead?

Now, Mr. Speaker, what's really important is that the rules that the minister spoke about, we need to determine the viability of those rules. We really need to know who is making the decisions around fighting the fire or evacuating the members of a threatened community. Who pays those particular bills when the evacuation's in place? Because, Mr. Speaker, what I'm thinking is happening is a lot of times the provincial government does not want to have, nor put the resources into fighting some of these fires, Mr. Speaker. So the net effect is they don't fight the fires and they evacuate a whole bunch of people under the premise of being concerned about their safety. And the federal government pays all of those costs, and it's much easier and much more cost-effective for the province to simply evacuate people as opposed to fighting the fire that affects their community because when they evacuate, the federal government pays most of those costs. So, Mr. Speaker, there's that confusion there as well.

What is the intent behind this whole fire suppression model that, you know, the government talks about, that the minister talks about, if they're not practising what they preach in the event that there's evacuation, a large-scale evacuation of some of the First Nations communities that may be threatened by fire, Mr. Speaker? And that's what's really, really important to us.

I can remember a number of years ago that there was a number of the opposition MLAs at the time that flew out to the Far North, and I think one of the MLAs that took that flight is now I think the Minister of Agriculture. And one of the points that he raised in his trip is that . . . The government of the day at the time was the NDP. He accused the NDP of developing this let-it-burn policy, saying that that's their response to northern fires, of letting it burn.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have not heard a peep from that member or the other Sask Party MLAs that took that tour. They've not said a word of this since they've been in government because quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what they done at the time is they created a policy of let it burn, and they're following that let-it-burn policy to this day. Yet they've done it neatly in the sense of saying, it's not us that created it; it was the NDP that created it.

Now today their let-it-burn policy is creating havoc with not only people's lives, Mr. Speaker, but it's destroying a lot of valuable land, traplines, and it's forever marring the landscape of northern Saskatchewan. And I would ask today, why would those three members go up to the Far North decrying this whole lack of response to fighting some of the forest fires in northern Saskatchewan, and when they've become government, they don't acknowledge any of these issues have ever existed?

So, Mr. Speaker, we don't forget some of those points that were raised by the government today. We know that as a result of the bill that's being introduced today that they're going to continue sitting on their hands. And despite the fire Act being proposed today, I can guarantee today that the minister that is sponsoring the fire protection Act, he turns to his colleague from Saskatchewan Environment and says, we need to fight those fires.

Well the big question is, what kind of budget have they got to fight these northern fires, Mr. Speaker? We've seen that budget declining, Mr. Speaker. We've seen the let-it-burn policy being expanded under their watch. So it's one thing to be able to talk about the issue, but it's another thing to get in the government and forget the issue ever happened and to actually create more problems, to build on that original vision they had of letting northern Saskatchewan burn.

So their let-it-burn policy, Mr. Speaker, is in effect today. And many northern Saskatchewan people are getting awfully tired of watching their land, their cabins, their traplines burn up because the Saskatchewan Party have a let-it-burn policy — a let-it-burn policy that, I dare say, was developed while they were in opposition.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would say again today that there is a lot of concern when we look at the notion of, in this particular bill, when they say that there is certain powers that the cabinet will have when they may be "exempting on any terms or conditions . . . any land, premises, person or thing, or any class of land, premises, person or thing, or from all or any part of this Act or the regulations."

Now what is that about? Is that a precursor to their let-it-burn policy where they can say, okay, we have this provincial fire strategy in place, but we're going to let the cabinet decide whether we're going to let certain pieces of land burn in the northern parts or even southern parts of Saskatchewan. Well we're able to give cabinet the authority to say we're going to fight that fire or not.

So, Mr. Speaker, that really qualifies my particular point, is that it's one thing to talk about being fire smart, being prepared for fires, but it's another thing to watch that the Sask Party talks about that, but in the meantime they have a let-it-burn policy that is quite frankly allowing this government to sit on their hands and half the North burns. And it's a creation of that particular policy that I give full marks and full credit especially to the Minister of Agriculture.

And I'll remember the two other gentlemen that travelled with him. I'm sure my memory will come back, and I will note their participation at a later time because, Mr. Speaker, that was their intent right from day one. And I think the members that actually went were Allchurch and Brkich or Last Mountain . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. This is the second time that I've cautioned, this is the second time that I have cautioned the member. Don't do it again. I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I think it was the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood that accompanied the Minister of Agriculture to the North to talk about the let-it-burn policy, Mr. Speaker.

And the people of the North were asking questions about, you know, why are they talking about this particular policy? Well here it was, Mr. Speaker. They were doing a trial balloon of what they thought would be a great policy for northern

Saskatchewan. And when they got a lot of the feedback from the people that were quite angry, well instead of them claiming it was their policy — as we see evidence of today that it was indeed their policy, they were developing this policy, Mr. Speaker — they then tried to blame the NDP of having this let-it-burn policy.

And since that date, Mr. Speaker, when they assumed government there has not been one little peep from any of those three members of the Saskatchewan Party caucus that travelled up there to talk about repealing this whole supposedly nefarious plan to let it burn by the previous government. It was their policy, their language, and we're seeing that particular policy being put in place today. And when we talk about it today, Mr. Speaker, all of sudden you can see they're sitting on their hands. They're very quiet in their chairs because, Mr. Speaker, they knew it was not the responsible thing to do then, but they're practising what they decied many, many years ago was an unacceptable practice.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's one of the reasons why, on this side of the Assembly, when the people in the Saskatchewan Party go out into especially the Far North and talk about issues that are concerning to them, I tell the people, don't listen because, quite frankly, they're not intending to do anything about that particular situation. It'll only make matters worse because they certainly don't respect what the local people have to say when it comes to being fire smart, being prepared in terms of making sure they have the proper equipment and having good trained manpower that is respected, supported, and appreciated, Mr. Speaker. So I think there's a lot of issues that I think is important that we speak about with this particular bill.

The Fire Safety Act itself, Mr. Speaker, there are so many components to it. Grassland fires, obviously the RMs are involved. How is the collaboration for regional team-building? Is there some of that work happening? Because we know that on many occasions it is usually the fire department that's first called, and I know we have a 911 system now. How is the process developed? Like who are the first people on site? Who are the first responders that are out there that would actually be able to respond to a crisis, whether it's a car fire, a grassland fire, or whether it's an accident or whether it's a derailment, any of these sort of accidents?

Who are the first groups of people that are usually on site, Mr. Speaker? It is usually the firefighters and it may be the ambulance service. It may be a first-aid crew, Mr. Speaker. These are the first people that respond to these crises. And I wouldn't mind knowing each of the areas that we have in each of the regions we have, and especially the underserved and the remote areas. How is that team-building going on? How is the analysis of the training that is required for that particular area? How is it being delivered? Are they being thorough in that training?

The other issue that we can talk about, Mr. Speaker, is how about an inventory of the equipment? What equipment does that region have? How far away are they and who makes the calls? These are very complex, a complex situation, Mr. Speaker, in the sense of when you look at these situations overall, you want to make sure that there's decisive, immediate action, that there isn't confusion, and that everybody knows what they've got to

do. And that's one of the messages we got from the professional fire fighters, is that you've got to have a good plan. You've got to have a good strategy, and you've got to have immediate action that is thought out, that is careful, and that is comprehensive. And that's one of the messages I want to share today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier that some of the northern communities are working very hard to continue to maintain a good, responsive local fire department. But I can tell you today that because they're so far apart from each other, each of these communities have to have good training. Each of these communities have to have a good volunteer base. Each of these communities have to have a fire hall, fire equipment, a rescue vehicle of some sort, and that costs a lot of money.

I know a lot of communities are really, really stretched to the limit in the sense of making sure they have the basic programs in place, the basic services in place. And one of the . . . The premise of some of these communities, that you've got to have water and sewer, you've got to have services such as fire and rescue, you've got to have issues of making sure that the streets are safe — these are all the work that the local community leaders do on a continual basis, Mr. Speaker.

[16:15]

So a lot of times, a lot of times, a lot of times if you look at how these communities are really trying and struggling hard, Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that they're doing this at great cost to their community in terms of dollars. And many of these communities are absolutely stretched to the limit in the sense of making their budgets work. And that's why in some of my closing comments I want to point out it's unfair for the province and the federal government to put more strain on these northern communities by forcing them to take money from their operating budgets that would operate fire departments to put towards meeting another strong need in our communities, the need to build more housing.

And I noticed that the minister for housing and her federal cousin, the MP came to our community and announced housing starts, but the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse had to pay something like close to 60 per cent of those costs. And that's the first time we've seen communities having to pay that money from their operating budget. And that's a crying shame, Mr. Speaker, because what the signal is is the federal and provincial government are getting out of providing housing supports for low-income families and those that need homes, decent homes, Mr. Speaker. We've seen that evidence occur. And the point I would make is, that has a negative dramatic effect on the local budgets. Now what happens next year if there's more housing that's going to be needed? Does the community go into further debt? Do they begin to compromise essential services like fire departments training and preparedness for fires and educating people on being aware of some dangers associated with house fires?

So the list goes on as to how this government has said some, have used some crafty words in their legislation. But their actions in the background does not constitute any of the good values that we have spoken about with the impacted communities when it comes to being prepared for fire,

understanding and being aware of the challenges of fire and, above all else, respecting and demanding we all have good protection from fire threats to our homes and to our families by having a well-resourced, well-trained, well-trained, and highly effective firefighting team locally. I think that goes without saying.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know my colleagues will have a lot more to say about say about this. So on that note I move that we adjourn the debate on Bill 170, *The Fire Safety Act*.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 170, *The Fire Safety Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 145

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wyant that **Bill No. 145 — *The Fee Waiver Act*** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Glad to join debate today on Bill No. 145, *The Fee Waiver Act*. Certainly this pertains to the ability of individuals of all incomes to access the legal system, be it the different levels of court or the different tribunals and quasi-judicial processes that we have in the province, Mr. Speaker.

And on the face of this it looks like a good piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, inasmuch as it will hopefully rely on the good work of the Law Reform Commission and in response to other court decisions that have been made. But again I think the main thing that it's driving at, Mr. Speaker, is the ability of poor people to access the legal system. And I guess something we'll be watching very closely, Mr. Speaker, is how that actually plays out, whether or not the measures contained in this legislation aid in greater availing by low-income folks of their legal rights or not, or whether in fact this . . . Does this have a possibility of further bureaucratizing and complicating the access of individuals to their legal rights?

In the second reading speech of the minister, Mr. Speaker, the minister referred to again creating “. . . an updated fee waiver program in Saskatchewan allowing for the waiver of administrative fees at courts and tribunals for lower income litigants” and implementing “. . . various enhancements to the existing fee waiver program.”

In terms of there being no fee waiver program available at present in a small claims court, Mr. Speaker, this would purportedly address that inadequacy, Mr. Speaker. And where the Court of Appeal currently accepts fee waivers issued for the Court of Queen's Bench, there being no process to obtain a new

waiver at the Court of Appeal, and this Act again, and we'll see how this plays out, purportedly will allow individuals to apply for a fee waiver at all three levels of court.

Again, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of processes that are envisioned in the . . . or that are encompassed by the three levels of court, but there's also bodies such as the Automobile Injury Appeal Commission or the Office of Residential Tenancies, Mr. Speaker, that are specifically iterated under the Act. There's a power to add that is envisioned in the Act, Mr. Speaker, in terms of folding in other judicial bodies. And again, Mr. Speaker, we'll be looking to see how this plays out and how it's informed by the experience from other jurisdictions.

Where the Act transfers administration of the fee waiver applications from the Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission to individual courts and tribunals, again, Mr. Speaker, it'll be interesting to see how that plays out. Will this in fact bring these remedies closer to the individuals and make for a better, smoother processing of or accessing of one's legal rights through these different courts and tribunals? Moving that from the Legal Aid Commission, it will be interesting to see, Mr. Speaker, if this alleviates . . . how much work this has constituted for the Legal Aid Commission.

At present we know that certainly legal aid and the funding thereof is a point of some contention between the provincial and federal government, and certainly the significant duress that the resources in the Legal Aid Commission are under. But whether or not it accomplishes that, Mr. Speaker, or if it makes it harder for individuals to figure out how to access these resources, it'll be interesting to see.

In terms of the court and tribunal officials having the authority to administer application processes and having discretionary authority to refer applications to the court or tribunal for determination where appropriate, again hopefully that situates the ability to make that judgment call closer to where it serves the individuals looking to access their rights under these proceedings. But again, Legal Aid has such a presence of . . . is so well known in terms of where people would turn for help. Does it make more sense to move it from Legal Aid or does it make more sense to situate it with a court tribunal processes? We shall see.

In terms of “application processes being kept simplified in order to ensure that eligible individuals as well as courts and tribunals are not negatively impacted by administrator processes or delays,” fair enough, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of the eligibility for the few waivers being based on simplified criteria set out in the regulations, again referencing the minister's second reading speech, as is the case with many things, Mr. Speaker, we will be interested to see whether or not the regulations are as good as that contention and will in fact simplify things, or if the criteria is onerous to the point of again making this seem like a good measure. But if you can't access these resources, or these measures, Mr. Speaker, then what good is that?

In terms of there being “discretionary authority to grant fee waivers in special circumstances to individuals who do not meet regular qualifications,” and thereby ensuring that “the fee

waiver program remains flexible enough to respond to the unique circumstances of individual litigants,” referencing the minister’s second reading speech, that would seem to be a reasonable measure, Mr. Speaker, but . . . and again, empowering the various judicial officials and to make those calls closer to where these things are happening, but how that flexibility works out, we shall see.

In terms of the current regime where litigants “must apply for a fee waiver for the Court of Queen’s Bench prior to taking any other steps in a proceeding. [Wherein] As a result, individuals who are unable to apply for a fee waiver prior to issuing a claim are prevented from receiving a fee waiver even if that individual does not have the means to pay the court fees,” and the new Act removing this rule and allowing litigants to apply for a fee waiver at any stage of the proceedings, that again would seem to be a favourable change, Mr. Speaker, making it more adaptable, more flexible to respond to the situation as it presents, but we will see how that plays out.

In terms of the, again, and I’ll get to this in my remarks, a bit further in my remarks, Mr. Speaker, but in terms of Ontario and British Columbia, which again the experience of those two jurisdictions informs a lot of what we see or what we’re told we see in this legislation in terms of self-represented litigants to apply for fee waiver certificates, again it would seem to be a good step but we’ll see what the incidence of that approach has been like in those jurisdictions.

In terms of fee waivers being only available to individuals represented by legal counsel, of course I don’t know if it’s the wide spread of programs like *Law & Order*, but certainly I would imagine there’s a broader sort of trend towards individuals self-representing. And certainly I know various lawyers that would make the point that you don’t, you don’t do home surgery, Mr. Speaker, that there’s a skill and a talent and a knowledge that comes with the legal credentials and that that is important to be able to be accessed. So again trying to balance that off between individuals representing themselves, but having similar resources if they’re in fact available.

I guess in terms of the courts granting . . . or in terms of the Act granting:

courts and tribunals discretionary authority to determine if costs should be awarded to or against a litigant who has been issued a fee waiver. In making this decision, courts and tribunals may take into account special factors including access to justice and fairness to the parties . . . [maintaining] a balance between promoting access to justice and deterring meritless or frivolous litigation by individuals who have been issued a fee waiver.

Again there needs to be those kind of safeguards in place in the regime, Mr. Speaker, to make sure these things are not, that they’re being used as intended, but not abused. So again we’ll look to see how that plays out in reality.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this would seem to be a decent piece of legislation. It would seem to reflect the increasing, the increasingly litigious nature of our society. And how do you balance off individual rights, and not just having those rights but being able to avail yourself of them, Mr. Speaker, in the

legal processes and at the same time have a system that has some relative ease of access and a straightforward quality to its process? That effort I’m sure continues, Mr. Speaker, in terms of trying to find that balance.

But as it stands right now, I’ve got further remarks I’ll reserve for the consequential amendment piece of this. But at the moment, Mr. Speaker, I’m prepared to move adjournment of Bill No. 145, *The Fee Waiver Act*.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 145, *The Fee Waiver Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — All those in favour say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — All those opposed say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

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

[The division bells rang from 16:30 until 16:40.]

The Speaker: — The motion before the House is the motion to adjourn by the Opposition House Leader on Bill No. 145, *The Fee Waiver Act*. All those in favour please rise.

[Yeas — 8]

Brotten	Forbes	Vermette
Belanger	Chartier	McCall
Nilson	Sproule	

The Speaker: — All those opposed please rise.

[Nays — 36]

Morgan	Stewart	Wyant
Duncan	Boyd	Eagles
McMorris	Toth	Moe
Docherty	Campeau	Cheveldayoff
Harrison	Tell	Ottenbreit
Norris	Kirsch	Bjornerud
Makowsky	Weekes	Cox
Wilson	Marchuk	Ross
Bradshaw	Michelson	Merriman
Young	Jurgens	Steinley
Hickie	Lawrence	Tochor
Parent	Phillips	Doke

Principal Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the motion, 8; those opposed, 36.

The Speaker: — The motion is lost. Debate will continue. I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — On we go, Mr. Speaker. It’s a new one on me, but on we go.

One of the interesting pieces of research that I think informs the work on *The Fee Waiver Act* is a work that was done May 2013 from the Law Reform Commission of Saskatchewan. It's entitled the *Access to Justice — Needy Person Certificates and Waiver of Fees*, Final Report, Mr. Speaker.

And I'd like to take some time to better acquaint the House with certain of the measures therein, and of course I bring this forward in hopes that unlike other pieces of Law Reform Commission work, that this government is actually paying attention to the suggestions from the Law Reform Commission. Certainly we know that as recommended around long-term care, Mr. Speaker, that recommendations of the Law Reform Commission not being observed by this government. But that's the way it goes.

It's a quote from the top of the report:

As the costs of litigation and other legal services rise, concern about financial barriers to access to justice is increasing. Under *The Queen's Bench Rules*, a potential litigant may, in some circumstances, obtain a waiver of court fees by obtaining a Needy Person Certificate. Needy Person Certificates are useful, but challenges exist respecting their scope and availability under the *QB Rules*. A further challenge is that Certificates are only available to litigants in the Court of Queen's Bench and Court of Appeal. Individual rights are also adjudicated in the Small Claims Court and by boards and tribunals, which have varying policies regarding fee waivers. Responses to the *Consultation Paper* generally affirm that Needy Person Certificates and fee waivers in Saskatchewan need to be updated and expanded. This Final Report sets out the Commission's proposals on improving access to justice for the less advantaged members of our community through fee waivers.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to state at this point a little bit about the Law Reform Commission of Saskatchewan. It was of course established by *An Act to establish a Law Reform Commission*, proclaimed in force in November 1973, and began functioning in February 1974. The commission, it was incorporated by an Act of the Saskatchewan legislature. Commissioners are appointed by order in council. The commission's recommendations are independent and are submitted to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Saskatchewan for consideration.

And again, Mr. Speaker, I might add parenthetically, this government's got a fairly checkered past when it comes to listening to the advice of the Law Reform Commission. Would but that they paid closer attention to the good counsel being provided by the Law Reform Commission.

"Projects . . ." Again returning to the report itself, Mr. Speaker:

Projects are initiated by the Commission in response to suggestions from the public and the legal community, or at the request of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. After preliminary research, the Commission usually issues background or consultation papers to facilitate consultation. Tentative proposals may be issued if the legal issues involved in a project are complex. Upon

completion of a project, the Commission's recommendations are formally submitted to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General as final proposals.

Mr. Speaker, this commission is funded by grants from the Law Foundation of Saskatchewan and the Ministry of Justice. And just to keep everybody up to date, the commissioners are Mr. Donald H. Layh, Q.C. [Queen's Counsel], Chair of the Commission; Ms. Susan Amrud, Q.C., no stranger to individuals here I would submit, Mr. Speaker; Professor Ronald C. Cuming; The Honourable Georgina R. Jackson; Professor Michaela Keet; Mr. Michael Milani, Q.C.; and Ms. Reché McKeague being the director of research. And the commission, of course, can be contacted at the Law Reform Commission of Saskatchewan, situated at the lovely University of Saskatchewan, room 209, College of Law, 15 Campus Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

And as with the other reports from the commission, Mr. Speaker, this report and other Law Reform Commission of Saskatchewan publications are available on their website which can be found at www.lawreformcommission.sk.ca.

Turning to the report itself, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the fairly wide-ranging discussion, certainly it's ranging from the recommendations stated right off the top, moving through the discussion of needy person certificates and fee waivers in Saskatchewan. Again needy person certificates themselves and fee waivers in other courts and tribunals. The discussion of fee waivers in other jurisdictions, with Ontario and British Columbia coming in for particular attention in terms of availability of fee waivers with self-represented litigants. The timing of how these things are administered, Mr. Speaker. Application in the Small Claims Court, tribunals. The qualifying process for a fee waiver, measurement of need, reasonable grounds, the evidence of need. And of course the consistency of fee waivers, and how to administer, name, and educate thereon.

In terms of the recommendations itself, Mr. Speaker, first off under the heading of availability of fee waivers, we've got five recommendations. Again, good recommendations and we'll be looking closely to see if they are to be located in the legislation brought forward by this minister, the first one being "Needy Person Certificates and fee waivers should be available to self-represented litigants."

Again if I could add as a tangent to that, Mr. Speaker, it's important that with this increasing trend towards self-represented litigants that these opportunities are made available. Again how that is mediated with the appropriateness of the counsel being provided and how that's working out and what the numbers are around that trend, Mr. Speaker, is something that we're very interested in finding out more about.

Secondly, "Needy person certificates and fee waivers should be available at any point in a proceeding." Again, Mr. Speaker, we think that one's located in the legislation. We'll be making sure that's actually the case. But in terms of how that works out, again it may not be readily evident off the top in a proceeding that needy person certificates are required or a fee waiver.

The third recommendation being, "A fee waiver program

should be established in Small Claims Court.” The fourth being, “Administrative tribunals in Saskatchewan that regularly adjudicate matters for members of the public should adopt fee waiver policies for individuals.” The fifth recommendation being that “The fee waiver application policy and process should be the same across all Saskatchewan courts and tribunals.”

Again, Mr. Speaker, these things being provided under the availability of fee waivers. And we’ll get into a more fulsome discussion of that shortly.

Coming in for the qualifying for a fee waiver, recommendation no. 6: “Fee waiver eligibility should be determined with reference to the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) [and there’s a reference I’ll get to there, Mr. Speaker], with flexibility to consider an applicant’s extraordinary circumstances.”

Again, it refers to Statistics Canada table 18, low income before tax cut-offs, the 1992 base for economic families and persons not in economic families 2005, modified the 11th of December 2007, available online at the Statistics Canada site, Mr. Speaker. And again, LICO referring to the income level at which family spends 20 per cent more of its income on food, shelter, and clothing than the average family, and of course being a commonly referenced measure of poverty here in Canada.

[Recommendation] 7. [Mr. Speaker, where] No merit or “reasonable grounds” test should be included in the fee waiver application process.

8. A fee waiver application form should be easy to use, clear and in plain language.

9. A litigant who has qualified for Legal Aid or met the income testing requirements of a Saskatchewan-based pro bono organization, such as Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan ... or Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City Inc. (CLASSIC), should automatically qualify for a fee waiver without further application.

10. A fee waiver application should be made directly to a court official or officer of a tribunal.

11. A fee waiver application form should require a declaration of receipt of social assistance or a simple financial statement, with additional proof to be provided only upon request.

12. An applicant for a fee waiver who does not meet the financial eligibility requirement should be entitled to apply for a fee waiver on the basis of extraordinary circumstances to a court official or officer of a tribunal and the application may be referred to the court or tribunal for decision.

Carrying on the report here, Mr. Speaker, we then come to a raft of recommendations under the heading of:

Consistency of fee waivers

13. Courts and tribunals should be responsible for issuing fee waivers for the fees they charge.

14. Court and tribunal staff should be trained about the process and be willing to assist people to fill out the application form.

15. All courts and tribunals should name their fee waiver ...

Be it the court, you know, insert name of court here, Mr. Speaker, or tribunal, concerning the Court of Queen’s Bench fee waiver, the Highway Traffic Board fee waiver. You get the picture.

Point no. 16, Mr. Speaker, or recommendation no. 16:

Education programs and materials should be available to inform people on the availability of, and application process for, fee waivers in Saskatchewan courts and tribunals.

Again, Mr. Speaker, a seemingly sensible raft of recommendations.

And now we’ll get into a discussion of what the meat of the report had to say. Under the introduction, and this of course can be found on page 3 of the report, Mr. Speaker:

Access to the courts has been described as “one of the foundational pillars protecting the rights and freedoms of our citizens.” In *BCGEU*, Chief Justice Dickson stated: “There cannot be a rule of law without access, otherwise the rule of law is replaced by a rule of men and women who decide who shall and who shall not have access to justice.” As the costs of litigation and other legal services rise, concern about financial barriers to access to justice is increasing.

Carrying on with the report, Mr. Speaker:

In 2006, the Canadian Bar Association (CBA) stated that “advocating for access to justice for poor people” had become its “top priority.” A report issued by the CBA observed that:

As lawyers, CBA members know that too many people have no access to the rights and protections our laws notionally provide. The poor people who are denied access to justice are the same people who already experience disadvantages of many other kinds, including women, children, people living with disabilities, Aboriginal people, members of racialized minorities, the elderly and refugees.

And again, coming from the Canadian Bar Association:

The problem of access has no simple answers. Changes in procedures to assist unrepresented clients, improvements in legal aid programs, support for legal clinics such as Community Legal Assistance Services for Saskatoon Inner City Inc. (CLASSIC) and encouragement of lawyers who are willing to act *pro bono* are among the strategies that have identified. This Final Report [again, from the Law Reform Commission, Mr. Speaker] discusses, and makes recommendations for, another piece of the search for solutions: fee waivers for individuals unable to pay the costs of litigation.

And might I add here, Mr. Speaker, I’m quite familiar with

some of the folks that do pro bono work here in the city of Regina. I've heard some great things about the folks that work with CLASSIC up in Saskatoon. And again these are highly skilled, highly educated individuals, Mr. Speaker, that could be making a pretty good buck elsewhere in the system but have devoted their services to make sure that we all have those legal rights under the constitution that again has been referred to one as of the foundational pillars protecting the rights and freedoms of our citizens.

Returning to the report, Mr. Speaker:

Court fees are charged when a civil case is initiated by filing the proper documents with the court, and sometimes at later stages in a proceeding. Under *The Queen's Bench Rules*, a potential litigant may, in some circumstances, obtain a waiver of court fees by obtaining a Needy Person Certificate. A Certificate is granted on application to the Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission if a means test is met and if the applicant "has reasonable grounds for taking or defending or being a party to proceedings." A Certificate also relieves the proposed litigant from responsibility for paying the other party's court costs if the litigation is unsuccessful.

Again, carrying on with the report here, Mr. Speaker:

Needy Person Certificates are useful, but challenges exist respecting their scope and availability under the *QB Rules*. Certificates are only available to litigants in the Court of Queen's Bench and Court of Appeal, which is a further challenge. Individual rights are adjudicated in the Small Claims Court and by boards and tribunals, which have varying policies regarding fee waivers.

Again, carrying on from the report, Mr. Speaker:

Court fees may be a bar to access. CLASSIC surveyed its clients to determine how frequently tribunal and court fees were a barrier to pursuing legal avenues:

Of the clients . . .

Quote from the report from CLASSIC, Mr. Speaker:

Of the clients who faced fees, 21% [who] were not able to pursue their matter because they could not afford the fee and no mechanism existed to have the fee waived. It is of significant concern that approximately one-fifth of low-income clients are not able to move forward with meritorious claims because they were not able to afford the fee.

Again, Mr. Speaker, to have access to your rights, you've got to have access to the courts. And these are some of the steps that will address, we hope, the tremendous inequity identified there by CLASSIC.

Returning to the report, Mr. Speaker:

Legal aid in Saskatchewan is only available for criminal and family law matters, and not to individuals who wish to sue for injury or breach of contract, or who seek other

remedies available only in court. CLASSIC provided the Law Reform Commission with two examples of situations in which fees were a barrier for its clients. The first involved an application in the Court of Queen's Bench.

Mr. Speaker, we'll get to that . . .

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

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

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