



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

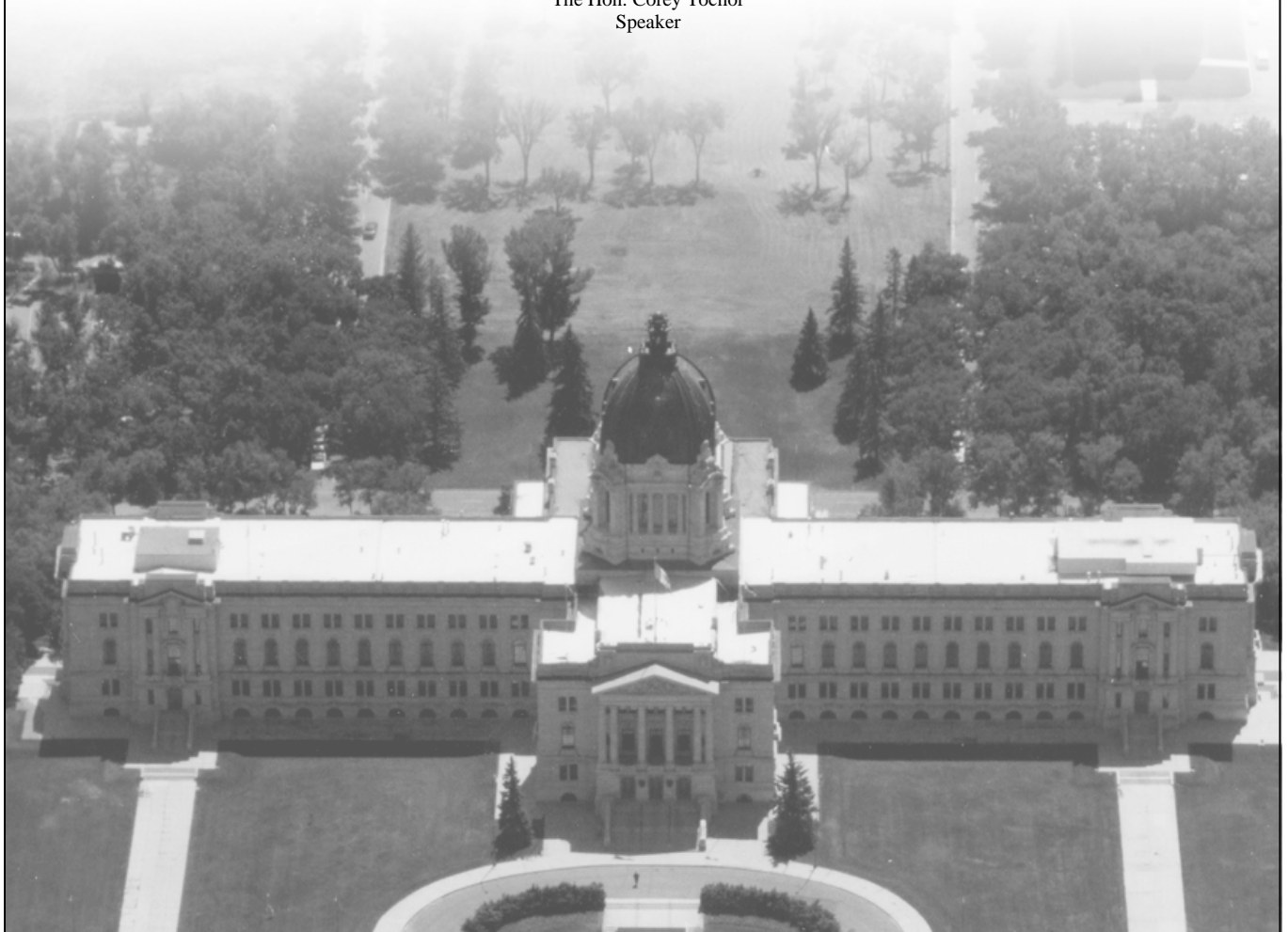
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Corey Tochor
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
1st Session — 28th Legislature

Speaker — Hon. Corey Tochor

Premier — Hon. Brad Wall

Leader of the Opposition — Trent Wotherspoon

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Lambert, Lisa — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)

Lawrence, Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)

Makowsky, Gene — Regina Gardiner Park (SP)

Marit, Hon. David — Wood River (SP)

McCall, Warren — Regina Elphinstone-Centre (NDP)

McMorris, Don — Indian Head-Milestone (SP)

Meili, Ryan — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)

Merriman, Hon. Paul — Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland (SP)

Michelson, Warren — Moose Jaw North (SP)

Moe, Hon. Scott — Rosthern-Shellbrook (SP)

Morgan, Hon. Don — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)

Nerlien, Hugh — Kelvington-Wadena (SP)

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Wilson, Hon. Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)

Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)

Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)

Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 50; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 11

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Gregory A. Putz

Law Clerk & Parliamentary Counsel — Kenneth S. Ring, Q.C.

Principal Clerk — Iris Lang

Clerk Assistant — Kathy Burianyak

Sergeant-at-Arms — Terry Quinn

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce and consider all stages of Bill No. 46, *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act* immediately.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested leave to introduce and consider all stages of Bill No. 46, *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act* immediately. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 46 — *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act*

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 46, *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act* be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that Bill No. 46, *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act* 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.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader may proceed to move second reading of this bill.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 46 — *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act*

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 46, *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act* be now read the second time.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved second reading of Bill No. 46, *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act*. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Government House Leader that Bill No.

46, *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I designate that Bill No. 46, *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act* be committed to the Committee of the Whole on Bills and the said bill be considered in the Committee of the Whole on Bills immediately.

The Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the Committee of the Whole on Bills.

Clerk: — Committee of the Whole.

The Speaker: — I do now leave the Chair for the Assembly to go into Committee of the Whole on Bills.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON BILLS

Bill No. 46 — *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act*

The Chair: — The item of business before the committee is Bill No. 46, *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act*. Clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clauses 1 to 6 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: Bill No. 46, *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act*. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the committee report the bill without amendment.

The Chair: — The Government House Leader has moved that the committee report Bill No. 46, *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act* without amendment. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

The Chair: — The Government House Leader has moved that the committee rise, report progress, 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 Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the committee to report Bill No. 46, *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act* without amendment.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader may proceed to move third reading. I recognize the Government House Leader.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 46 — *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act*

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved that Bill No. 46, *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act* be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the committee sit again? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

I'm advised that His Honour Justice Neal Caldwell, the Administrator of Saskatchewan, is here for Royal Assent. Please all rise.

ROYAL ASSENT

[At 13:39 His Honour the Administrator entered the Chamber, took his seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following bill.]

His Honour: — Pray be seated.

The Speaker: — May it please Your Honour, this Legislative Assembly in its present session has passed a bill which in the name of the Assembly I present to Your Honour, and to which bill I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Clerk: — Your Honour, the bill is as follows:

Bill No. 46 - *The Saskatoon Meewasin Constituency By-election Act*

His Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I assent to this bill.

[His Honour retired from the Chamber at 13.41.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to move a motion to recess for the swearing-in ceremony of the new member for Saskatoon Meewasin. The motion is:

That this Assembly recess for the administration of the oath of allegiance for the new member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

I so move.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader who made the motion.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move:

That this Assembly recess for the administration of the oath of allegiance for the member of Saskatoon Meewasin.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved:

That the Assembly recess for the administration of the oath of allegiance for the member for Saskatoon Meewasin.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This Assembly stands recessed to the call of the Chair.

[The Assembly recessed from 13:42 until 13:54.]

INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The Speaker: — Order. This Assembly is now reconvened. I hereby inform the Assembly that pursuant to an Act of this Legislative Assembly respecting a by-election in the constituency of Saskatoon Meewasin, which was assented to today, March 6th, 2017, Mr. Ryan Meili is authorized to take his seat as a member for the constituency of Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I have the honour to present to you Mr. Ryan Meili, member for the constituency of Saskatoon Meewasin, who has taken the oath, signed the roll, and now claims the right to take his seat.

The Speaker: — Mr. Ryan Meili, I want to welcome you to the Legislative Assembly. I hope that your time here will be one that serves to be a record of honour to yourself and your constituents. Let the hon. member take his seat.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Michael Boda, who is in my Speaker's gallery today. I'd like to congratulate him and the staff at Elections Saskatchewan for running a successful by-election.

Nearly 5,000 Saskatchewan voters expressed their preference for a candidate in the constituency of Saskatoon Meewasin. I'd like to thank all political parties, their volunteers and supporters that took part in the election, and more than 200 of our residents were part of the Elections Saskatchewan team supporting the successful administration of this election.

We want to publicly thank all those who took part in this important process. Note that the strong participation of voters, candidates, and election officials is a testament to the health of our democracy in Saskatchewan. Thank you all for taking part in the process.

I recognize the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sitting in the west gallery, I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce somebody that's no stranger to politics, and certainly no stranger to advocacy and helping out with a number of different campaigns. It's Conrad "Tigger" Johnson, and I'd like to take the opportunity not only to welcome him, but looking forward to continuing to work with you, Tigger. All the best. Take care. Thanks.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to welcome a couple of special guests to your gallery. First of all, Ms. Pamela Guest is here, no stranger to this Assembly, and someone who has and continues to do great work and advocacy on behalf of sexual abuse survivors in our province. So I welcome her.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also recognize and welcome Ms. Monique Goffinet Miller to this Assembly, someone who I've introduced before who comes to us from BC [British Columbia] with a long history and continued passion for advocating for women in leadership roles. And we're very glad to have her as one of our new residents of Saskatchewan and of Regina Lakeview. Thank you.

I would ask all members to join me in welcoming these two visitors to their Assembly. Thank you.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition organized by the Saskatchewan Seniors Association. They were concerned with the government's per-prescription increase last year to the seniors' drug plan, the increase of \$5 an individual for a prescription, Mr. Speaker, yet again. They're worried that with the upcoming budget that there will be further damaging changes, Mr. Speaker, that will have a huge impact on seniors and others, Mr. Speaker. They point out that this change affects 120,000 seniors by an average of about \$80 a year, Mr. Speaker, and when you're on a fixed income, that makes a huge difference. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Government of Saskatchewan take the necessary steps and immediate action to end this discrimination of the elderly and people afflicted with illness of Saskatchewan with per-prescription fee increase.

Mr. Speaker, today this petition, the pages that I'm handing in, Mr. Speaker, are signed by citizens of Nokomis, Nipawin, Quill Lake, Lanigan, many more Lanigan signatures, Stenen, Norquay, Perdue, Chitek Lake, Spiritwood, Goodsoil. You get the sense, Mr. Speaker, that many people across Saskatchewan have signed this petition. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

Mr. Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today in the presence of . . . for the citizens who are opposed to the federal government's decision to impose a carbon tax on the province of Saskatchewan. I'd like to read the prayer:

[14:00]

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the Government of Saskatchewan to take the necessary steps to stop federal government from imposing the carbon tax on the province.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the citizens of Hazlet, Gull Lake, Swift Current, Shaunavon, Pennant, Webb, Tompkins, McMahan, Carmichael, Piapot, Lancer, Weyburn, Regina, Maple Creek, Kincaid, and Saskatoon. I do present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, mister speaky or Speaker. I want to present a petition today as it relates to the second bridge in Prince Albert that people have been calling for. And obviously, Mr. Speaker, the need for a second bridge for Prince Albert has never been clearer than it is today.

Prince Albert communities and communities north of Prince Albert and the businesses that send people and products to Prince Albert require a solution. So:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan ask that the Sask Party government stop stalling, hiding behind rhetoric and refusing to listen to the people calling for action, and to begin immediately to plan and then quickly commence the construction of a second bridge for Prince Albert using federal and provincial dollars [Mr. Speaker].

The people that have signed this petition have signed from all throughout the lands, Mr. Speaker. And on these two particular pages, the people that have signed these pages are primarily from Prince Albert and area. And I so present.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to present a petition regarding pay equity here in Saskatchewan. And the following residents of Saskatchewan want to bring to our attention that the citizens of this province believe in an economy powered by transparency, accountability, security, and equity; and that all women should be paid equitably; and that women are powerful drivers of economic growth and their economic empowerment benefits all.

The Centre for Policy Alternatives found that in Saskatoon in 2016 women earned, on the average, 63 cents for every dollar that a man makes. And in Regina, women earned on average 73 cents for every dollar that a man makes. And according to the most recent StatsCan data, the national gender wage gap for all full-time workers is 72 cents for every dollar a man makes.

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 eliminate the wage gap between women and men across all sectors where the Government of Saskatchewan has jurisdiction, provide a framework under which this can be done within this term of this Assembly, and that the Saskatchewan government call upon all workplaces within Saskatchewan within the private sector to eliminate the wage gap between women and men.

Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition today are from the city of Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present to you a petition to increase funding to Prince Albert mobile crisis. The residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to your attention the following: Prince Albert mobile crisis unit has had to close its doors during daytime hours, resulting in a loss of resource to people in distress.

The daytime closure of Prince Albert mobile has put stress on the Prince Albert Police Service, Victoria Hospital, and other agencies who may not be trained and/or qualified to provide counselling and intervention services to clients.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Saskatchewan Party government to increase funding to Prince Albert mobile crisis unit so they may once again offer 24-hour emergency crisis service.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing this petition are from the city of Prince Albert. I do so present.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present the petition in support of sexual abuse prevention curriculum in Saskatchewan.

Those signing this petition wish to draw our attention to the following: Saskatchewan has the second highest rate of sexual child abuse in Canada. Child sexual abuse has lasting impacts throughout the lifetime of the victim; those include mental health impacts, PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder], depression, anxiety, panic attacks, and low self-esteem. They also include decreased school attendance and achievement and decreased productivity throughout the lifetime. Currently there is no comprehensive elementary or secondary curriculum regarding prevention of child abuse in Saskatchewan. I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan take immediate and concrete action to develop and implement Erin's law; and that such legislation would ensure that a comprehensive health education program be developed and implemented which would require age-appropriate sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention education in grades pre-K through grade 12, along with training school staff on the prevention of child abuse.

Mr. Speaker, those signing the petition today reside in Regina. I do so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition calling for a stop to the Sask Party sell-off of SaskTel. The undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to your attention the following: that after nearly a decade of wasting the economic boom and blowing through the savings, the government is now forcing Saskatchewan people to pay for Sask Party mismanagement.

They point out that in the recent election, the Sask Party promised that they would not privatize SaskTel. But now the petitioners point out that instead of looking at their own waste and scandal, the Sask Party is talking about breaking their promise and looking to sell off SaskTel to make a quick dollar.

And the petitioners point out that SaskTel is owned by all of us. It was built with Saskatchewan hard work, innovation, and pride. And they point out that SaskTel creates thousands of good jobs, ensures services to parts of the province that other providers ignore, and offers the lowest mobile phone rates in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, this particular batch of petitions in the prayer that reads as follows:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Saskatchewan Party government to keep their promise, stop their plan to sell off SaskTel, and keep our valued Crown corporation in the hands of the people of Saskatchewan.

This particular batch of petitions is signed by individuals from Air Ronge, La Ronge, Stanley Mission. And I so present.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House again today to present a petition calling on the government to reverse the cuts to the Aboriginal court worker program. The Government of Saskatchewan cut the budget for the Aboriginal court worker program in the 2016-2017 provincial budget.

Those on this side of the House know that Aboriginal court workers play an important role helping Aboriginal people in criminal and child apprehension cases. Aboriginal peoples are disproportionately represented in Saskatchewan's correctional centres, and Aboriginal court workers successfully help to make our communities safer through reduced recidivism rates. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan reverse its short-sighted and counterproductive cuts to the Aboriginal court worker program.

Those individuals signing the petition I submit today, Mr. Speaker, come from Asquith, La Ronge, and Saskatoon. I do so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Saskatoon Meewasin By-election

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously I'm new here. I will try to say "Speaker" every time, though, instead of "speaky."

It's an honour and a privilege to stand before you today as the representative for the constituency of Saskatoon Meewasin, and the newest member of the Saskatchewan NDP [New Democratic Party] caucus team.

The Saskatoon Meewasin by-election was won with the hard work and dedication of many volunteers, a great campaign team, as well as with the love and support of my wife, Mahli, our son, Abraham, and my parents, Wally and Lea, who are with us here today. For all of their support, I'm extremely grateful.

Mr. Speaker, during my time on the doorstep, I heard a lot from the people of Meewasin. I heard concern. I heard concern over

cuts to health care and education, concern about the sell-off of our Crown corporations, and the government's growing deficit.

It's clear, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Meewasin used this election to send a message. It's a message of concern but also one of hope. They believe we can do better and so do I.

I look forward to learning from my fellow NDP MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] and joining them in the hard work ahead in service of the people of Meewasin and all of Saskatchewan.

I ask all members today to join me in extending thanks to the candidates of each party for running a respectful and decent campaign, and to everyone whose hard work contributed to making this by-election possible, and to the people of Saskatoon Meewasin for casting their votes in this important by-election. Thank you.

The Speaker: — Well that was the shortest maiden speech ever. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Westview.

Telemiracle 41

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like so many residents, over the weekend I spent much of my time glued to the television, watching the Telemiracle count raise higher and higher. This past weekend the Kinsmen Foundation's 41st Telemiracle — and those ringing phones — did not disappoint.

I am pleased to announce, Mr. Speaker, that this year's fundraiser brought in a total of over \$5 million into our province, all of which stays in Saskatchewan. Having a special-needs daughter, I understand how critical this funding can be for individuals and their families. As one volunteer put it, it is a true testament to our prairie pioneer spirit.

I would like to take a moment to thank the countless volunteers as well, Mr. Speaker. Without their sleepless nights Telemiracle wouldn't be half of the success that it is today. Host Beverly Mahood kept the crowd and volunteers going, and of course it didn't hurt that the biggest telethon in Canada had some true stars performing. Those included Brad Johner and the Johner Boys, Donny Parenteau, the Hunter Brothers, and Sierra Noble.

I would ask all members, Mr. Speaker, to join with me and thank all of the performers, the volunteers, and the crew of Telemiracle 41. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Black History Month Events

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, February marked Black History Month, and throughout the month events were held in Regina and all over Saskatchewan in recognition of the immense contributions of African-Canadians and the celebration of their strength, leadership, and perseverance in Saskatchewan.

On February 1st I had the honour of bringing remarks, along with the minister, to the launch hosted by the Saskatchewan African Canadian Heritage Museum. The event's keynote

speaker was Dr. Barbara McNeil, a professor of education at the University of Regina who passionately discussed the opportunities, triumphs, challenges, and optimistic vision of African-Canadians in Saskatchewan.

On February 28th the Saskatchewan Caribbean Canadian Association held their annual Black History Month gala. The MLA for Regina Lakeview brought remarks to this very important and special event. The gala was highlighted by the SCCA [Saskatchewan Caribbean Canadian Association] Award of Recognition which was received by the brilliant and talented Judy Cobsar. It couldn't be more well deserved.

This important month and all of its events wouldn't be possible without the amazing contributions from people like Carol Lafayette-Boyd and so many more.

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate, reflect, and learn from the past, let us take heart the motto of our province, the province we all love: "from many peoples, strength." Most importantly, let's recommit to building together toward a future where we all fully and equally benefit from the true strength of Saskatchewan's many peoples. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

Coldest Night of the Year Fundraiser Held in Moose Jaw

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise in the Assembly today to acknowledge another successful fundraising event in Moose Jaw, the Coldest Night of the Year fundraiser for Moose Jaw's Riverside Mission.

This is the second year that the mission has hosted this event. For passersby it might have been a strange sight to see dozens of yellow toques walking down Main Street in Moose Jaw on February the 25th, but it was for a good cause. Participants solicited sponsorship to walk either a 2-, a 5-, or a 10-kilometre route.

Mr. Speaker, the Coldest Night of the Year events are hosted across Canada and are meant to bring awareness for homeless and poverty in our communities. This year organizers saw about 100 participants supported by about 30 volunteers.

The event kicked off at a welcoming ceremony held at the First Baptist Church where I was joined by the member of Moose Jaw Wakamow, the mayor, and event leaders. It was a pleasant night for a walk to raise funds and to bring awareness. When the walk was completed, the participants were greeted with cheers and a bowl of warm chili.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating the staff, the volunteers, and the walkers of the Coldest Night of the Year event on another successful event and thanking the Riverside Mission for the great work that they do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[14:15]

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

Waskimo Winter Festival Returns to Regina

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Family Day, I had the great pleasure of bringing greetings at the Waskimo Winter Festival. Mr. Speaker, the first Waskimo festival was held on Wascana Lake in 1975, and it quickly became an annual carnival on ice. Unfortunately the festival was put on hold due to the big dig at Wascana Lake, but after a 14-year hiatus the festival finally returned this year.

For decades, attending Waskimo Winter Festival was a yearly tradition for many families. It was very exciting to be able to attend the festival with families from all over the city to start the tradition again. Bringing this winter festival back to the city of Regina and to our province makes a wonderful contribution to the strong quality of life we enjoy here in Saskatchewan.

The outdoor festival included ice sailing, snow cricket, shinny, horse-drawn sleigh rides, and outhouse races. This year's event also had indoor festivities such as a carnival, dog sports, drums, and gymnastics.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank all the organizers for all their hard work in getting this special event relaunched, and I'd also like to thank all the volunteers and sponsors for your time and generosity. This festival could not have happened without you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Recognizing Long-Time Huskies Football Coach

Mr. Makowsky: — Thanks a lot, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to stand in the House today to acknowledge Brian Towriss for his 33 years as head coach of the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] Huskies football program.

B.T., as he is fondly known, is a native of Moose Jaw and attended the U of S from '74 to '77, where he played along the defensive line. He also got his commerce degree. He wasn't away from the U of S for long, as he returned as assistant coach in 1980 and then became the head coach in '84, succeeding Val Schneider.

In his legendary career, B.T. led his team to nine Vanier Cups, winning three of them. He was nine-time Conference Coach of the Year and won the Frank Tindall Trophy in 1994 as the top coach in the nation. He has coached 315 games in total. Now keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, there's only eight regular-season games in Canada West football. He won 196 of those games, and they are both CIS [Canadian Interuniversity Sport] records. He's had 47 former players that went on to play pro football and was given the province's highest honour, the Order of Merit, in 2007.

Wins and awards are very important of course in competitive sports, but more importantly I think to B.T., he was always deferring praise. He was selfless, and he was always Huskies first. So those things weren't as important to him, but I think, Mr. Speaker, more importantly B.T. mentored and led a generation of young athletes and coaches to grow into community leaders themselves within our province and all

across our country, and who continue to carry his great legacy and example with them every day.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members of this Assembly to join me in thanking Brian Towriss for many years of great football and dedication to the University of Saskatchewan and our province.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Estevan.

Saskatchewan Number One for Mining Investment

Ms. Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Fraser Institute released its annual report on the most attractive mining jurisdictions in the world, and it turns out it was good news for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, out of the 104 jurisdictions surveyed, Saskatchewan was named the number one jurisdiction in the world for mining companies to invest. When looking into the details of the report, we see that our province moved up from second place last year and ranks well in every category.

Mining is an important industry for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, stretching from Estevan to the furthest edges of the North, providing jobs for families. Mr. Speaker, we have committed to making Saskatchewan a great place to live, work, and invest, and this is proof that we have kept that promise.

We will continue to reject those who impose ideology over practical solutions for our economy, whether that's the federal carbon tax or the NDP Leap Manifesto. Instead, we will continue to support an innovative industry that works for our First Nations, our post-secondary institutions, and our communities. And we will continue to encourage investment in Saskatchewan's mining industry to build a better province for everyone. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Auditor's Report and Public Accounts Committee Meeting

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, we heard a pretty clear message from the people of Meewasin last week, and we've been hearing that from people all across our province. The people of Saskatchewan are sick and tired of the Sask Party's mismanagement, their scandal, and their waste.

And, Mr. Speaker, while the House hasn't been sitting, the Sask Party hasn't missed an opportunity at the Public Accounts Committee to avoid accountability, shut down debate, and hide the truth from Saskatchewan people with their GTH [Global Transportation Hub] land scandal. The two witnesses they did allow weren't there at the beginning of the scandal and they were on vacation at the end of it. One didn't sign the documents himself because he was apparently running around a beach looking for a fax machine.

Mr. Speaker, why are they still blocking the witnesses that actually knew what went down in the GTH land scandal? What does the Premier have to hide?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the interim leader of the NDP for the question. I want to welcome as well the brand new member for Saskatoon Meewasin, who may well be the future of that party and the future leader of the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, I would just say with respect to the questions that have been asked, the people that the member's referring to in terms of potential witness to the committee were also available to the auditor to be interviewed, were interviewed, Mr. Speaker, by the auditor. The auditor has reported, Mr. Speaker. She's noted that the government made some mistakes on the GTH. We've acknowledged that. We have accepted the recommendations and are moving on it.

I would also note, Mr. Speaker, that according to press reports the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] are looking into this matter. Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear that we will co-operate with the RCMP on this matter.

I note that the Provincial Auditor has said there wouldn't be much of a need or much of a purpose, a construct for a forensic audit pending that review by the RCMP. So, Mr. Speaker, we want to see that work done. We'll co-operate, Mr. Speaker, as I know members opposite would expect us to and, Mr. Speaker, we look forward frankly to the conclusion of that review.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, what a bunch of utter nonsense from that Premier, and the people of Saskatchewan just aren't buying those lines.

You know, the Sask Party still wants us all to believe that there is just some sort of miscommunication between ministries. Come on. We know that the DM [deputy minister] of Highways and the CEO [chief executive officer] of the GTH were communicating regularly. They met in person. They had emailed and they worked together on projects. And cabinet, cabinet itself sitting here today, met over and over again. But the Sask Party wants us to believe that no one spoke about this massive deal. It's just not believable, Mr. Speaker.

I guess, to the Premier: remembering that the auditor herself said there were more questions that exist here, and knowing that millions of hard-earned dollars have been wasted, will he finally direct his caucus members to invite people who are actually responsible for the scandal to committee to testify? Or will he just keep hiding from the facts and hoping that it goes away?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, were the government hiding from anything, we wouldn't have directed the Provincial Auditor to do a full review of the matter and then to make that review public and moreover, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the auditor had access to any cabinet document that the auditor's team felt they needed.

I would also point out for members across the way, who

conveniently forget to mention this important part of her investigation, is that she has noted there was someone with forensic auditing capacity on her team — expressly, I think, probably there for the purpose of determining whether something more forensic was required.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would also note that in July, Mr. Speaker, shortly after her report was tabled, on province-wide media, on province-wide media she indicated there were no red flags that her investigation determined that would require further action, Mr. Speaker. This is what's happened in this case.

Mr. Speaker, I would also point out that since we last met here in this place, there has been a purchaser come forward with a further advance of dollars on land bought at the GTH. Mr. Speaker, we're now at \$3 million — well they're murmuring — \$3 million paid for land at a \$7.6 million total purchase price of 30 acres. So divide that out, Mr. Speaker. What does that mean that taxpayers got for that acreage, per acre of land? \$256,000 per acre for the taxpayers on the land. Mr. Speaker, even using the purchase price and the servicing cost, taxpayers are making money on GTH land sold to that proponent right now.

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

Government's Fiscal Management

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, with spin like that, the deficit that's growing makes a whole lot more sense. The actions of that Premier have been indefensible, Mr. Speaker, and the truth is that fewer and fewer Saskatchewan people are believing anything that they say.

Just look at the budget. First, they hid their budget during the election. Then they said they'd balance the books. Then it was going to be \$400 million of deficit, then \$800 million, then \$1.2 billion. Then last week the Finance minister's out contradicting the Premier and it's even higher than that.

You know, they do a lot of bragging about their record. But the fact is their record is deficit after deficit after deficit. In fact over three and a half billion dollars of new debt have been added by that Sask Party in just the past two years.

You know, they hid the financial first quarter. Now they're hiding the third quarter report, all while they've been attacking the most vulnerable in our society, threatening our families, threatening our workers, threatening our Crown corporations. Will the Premier come clean, reveal the true state of our finances to Saskatchewan people, take responsibility for his historic mismanagement of our finances instead of forcing Saskatchewan people to pay the price?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, may I just say to the interim leader of the NDP that the management of the province's finances on this side of the House has resulted in the first-ever AAA credit rating this province has ever received. The financial management on this side of the House has resulted in a 30 per cent payoff of the operating debt inherited from members opposite. The financial management of this side of the House has led to \$6 billion in cumulative tax relief for

Saskatchewan families, farmers, and businesses, creating the Saskatchewan advantage. The financial management on this side of the House has resulted in \$8 billion in more infrastructure investment in this province than in their last eight years in office, Mr. Speaker. That's the record.

The financial management on this side of the House has meant 754 more teachers in the province, 3,000 more nurses of every designation, 650 more doctors . . . well 649 maybe, Mr. Speaker. That is the result, Mr. Speaker, of the financial management on this side of the House. Investments in public service; paying off of operating debt; low taxes, Mr. Speaker. That has led to strong economic growth over this last decade and, most importantly, Mr. Speaker, most importantly the largest population growth in the history of this province since its earliest days — 1.14 million people in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — It seems the Premier's approach is just to crank up the volume as the red ink rolls in and the promises are broken, but Saskatchewan people are going to hold him to account. Instead of forcing Saskatchewan people to pay the price for the Sask Party mismanagement, scandal, and waste, instead of cutting in our hospitals and our kids' classrooms, instead of desperately trying to sell off our Crowns, instead of attacking workers and ripping up their contracts, why won't the Premier look at his own failures?

We could start with a massive overrun, a billion-dollar-plus overrun with the Regina bypass contract. Will he look at that? Better yet, will he finally show it to Saskatchewan people? Or, Mr. Speaker, will he explain why he'd rather attack the contracts he has with Saskatchewan people than to go at the billion-dollar overrun with a French conglomerate and beyond?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what's interesting, what's going to be interesting during this session as we get to the budget on March 22nd when we lay out our plan for dealing with the financial situation here in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well we're going to find out on March 22nd. The member from Athabasca has never offered a plan in this House ever, Mr. Speaker, and now he sits here and criticizes the plan we haven't even brought down yet. It's going to be on March 22nd. We're going to have plenty of opportunity, Mr. Speaker, after March 22nd, to debate the plan we're going to put forward to deal with the financial situation in this province.

What's going to be interesting is what we'll hear from the Leader of the Opposition and the Finance critic and the future leader of the opposition as to what their plan might be in dealing with the financial situation in this province, Mr. Speaker. Because what we're going to hear during this session, I daresay . . . I'm going to go out on a limb here, Mr. Speaker. I daresay we're going to hear from the Education critic and the Health critic and the Labour critic and the Finance critic. Every single day of this legislature, Mr. Speaker, they're going to get up on their feet and say the government should be spending more money in virtually every area of the government.

Mr. Speaker, \$1.2 billion in lost resource revenues and they want us to spend more money, Mr. Speaker. That's not going to happen.

[14:30]

The Speaker: — I would ask members to please listen to the questions and answers here today. I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Employment and Provincial Economy

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister can yell and point the finger all he wants but he should pay better attention to the four fingers pointing back at him.

The Sask Party's failures on the job creation front go far beyond their \$2 billion bypass boondoggle. Last month's job numbers showed that there were nearly 9,000 fewer people working than one year ago and the unemployment rate has increased by more than 16 per cent. But instead of real leadership and action to create good, mortgage-paying jobs, the Sask Party shifts the blame, stirs up fights and distraction, and refuses to take responsibility for their failures.

When will the Sask Party stop with the games and get serious about getting Saskatchewan people back to work?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Economy, SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority], and the GTH.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well, Mr. Speaker, let's review the facts. Saskatchewan has the fourth-lowest unemployment rate in the entire country despite the challenges that we know that we're facing because of the downturn in the price of oil and other commodities. We have the third-lowest youth unemployment rate in the entire country. We're below the national average by a significant component.

And let's look at just manufacturing sales last month: highest month-over-month growth in the entire country, 5.4 per cent month over month in December to \$1.32 billion. The first time ever, Mr. Speaker, average weekly earnings topping \$1,000 at over \$1,010 in December 2016. Retail sales leading the country, Mr. Speaker, last month.

The economy continues to move forward. The economy continues to show strength, and we're going to continue to make sure that it does.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, after months of bad numbers on the job front, people are looking for answers from this government, but the only thing we've heard from the Sask Party's plan for jobs is their plan for cuts. Teachers, nurses, and public servants all across our province are being threatened with layoffs and wage cuts. They're even looking at firing the janitors at the Legislative Building, Mr. Speaker, in a move that wouldn't save a dime. They're asking people to pay the price for Sask Party mismanagement, scandal, and waste — callous cuts on top of job losses month after month.

Doesn't the Premier understand that you can't create jobs by cutting them?

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I find it pretty rich, Mr. Speaker, coming from the party opposite who, when they were in government, had the worst job creation record in the entire country, Mr. Speaker — dead last. From 2007 to 2015, on this side of the House, the best job creation record in the entirety of Canada, Mr. Speaker — 64,000 jobs created over that period of time. We continue to have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. We're seeing Saskatchewan leading Canada in terms of wholesale trade, in terms of retail sales, Mr. Speaker. The economy is continuing to move forward.

Even though they continue to talk down the economy, we're going to continue to make sure the economy's strong and growing.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Ownership of SaskTel

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, it's cold comfort to the 40,000 Saskatchewan people that are out of work on this government's watch. The Sask Party's callous cuts are putting thousands of jobs at risk, more jobs, Mr. Speaker. And their plan to sell off up to 49 per cent of our Crowns without a referendum puts even more jobs at risk along with hundreds of millions of dollars in dividends that help to pay for health care and education.

The Sask Party's plan to sell our Crowns to pay for their mismanagement was given a resounding no in the Meewasin by-election, Mr. Speaker, and the Sask Party should listen to that message. Will the Premier honour his promise from the last election? Will he stop the attempted sell-off? Will he scrap Bill 40 today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I want to thank the member for the question. By the way, the preamble for the earlier questions was about the economy and jobs in the province. It's interesting coming from a party that's just elected its future leader who supports the federally imposed carbon tax, which we know that will cost jobs here in the province.

With respect to the Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, let me say this: what we said in the wake of the MTS [Manitoba Telephone System] takeover, Mr. Speaker, is that were we, as the representatives of the shareholder, to get an offer with respect to SaskTel to buy SaskTel in its entirety, were we to get an offer that checked off a number of boxes including better coverage and jobs here in Regina and across the province and a good price, that we would take that deal to the people in a referendum.

What has become abundantly clear to members on this side of the House, what has become abundantly clear to me — yes, and including what we heard in the Meewasin by-election but not limited to that — is that the people of the province aren't interested in it. They're not interested in a referendum. They

oppose the sale of SaskTel, Mr. Speaker. That is what we campaigned on.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will just confirm for members of the House that notwithstanding if there ever is an offer to purchase SaskTel, we're not going to take it forward. It's not for sale.

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

Release of Third Quarter Update

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, even considering, even considering selling off our service-providing, rate-reducing, job-creating, and money-making Crown corporations just shows how irresponsible and short-sighted those guys are. Sure they'll get some fast cash, but the people of this province will pay the price for generations.

Don't they think they've done enough damage? Their projected deficit just keeps going higher and higher — 200, 400, 800, \$1.2 billion — and it's still rising. Every week, Mr. Speaker, it's a new number. It's a good thing the budget's coming out soon or who knows how high the deficit would get.

Since the Premier refused to give a straight answer, maybe the Finance minister will now just come clean with the state of the finance. He didn't talk about Bill 40 at all, Mr. Speaker. He completely avoided the question. Will the Finance minister provide us, the people of Saskatchewan, with the update that we know he has and work with us to find solutions that invest in Saskatchewan people and our future?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the third quarter update is coming on March 22nd. It is not unusual for the third quarter update to be presented in this House in March since we went to summary financial statements two years ago.

Matter of fact, two years ago when we went to full summary financial statements, Mr. Speaker, at the behest of the opposition — I'll give them credit for that; they insisted upon it — we went to summary financial statements. The third quarter update was brought in on March 18th of that year, the same day as the budget. The former minister of Finance, Mr. Krawetz, announced that we were going to attempt to bring the third quarter financial update on the same day as the budget as long as the legislative calendar continued to be the same and the budget was always delivered in March, Mr. Speaker.

What has changed since then: we now have over a 150-plus . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well are you interested in the answer or chirping from your seat? What has changed since then, Mr. Speaker, is that we have 150-plus entities that report in the consolidated financial statements, Mr. Speaker.

What we changed last year was the end of the fiscal year for the Crown corporations in this province, that they now align with the executive side of government with their year-end of March 31st, Mr. Speaker. We are gathering that information.

As information becomes available to us, naturally Treasury Board and me as Finance minister would brief the Premier when there is some circumstances that show that the deficit could be higher, as was the case with crop insurance claims coming in after the Q2 [second quarter] update with still over 1 million acres out there, Mr. Speaker, that's not been harvested yet. We know that there's a least a quarter billion dollars in additional crop insurance claims. The premier talked about that at the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention. I don't know how much more clear he could be with respect to what's happening with the deficit in this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, the refusal to be straight in the scope of the financial mismanagement by the Sask Party is as inexcusable as it is hard to believe. For Saskatchewan families and workers, times are tough. But instead of providing straight answers and stability, the Sask Party is throwing around spin lines. How does that help Saskatchewan people losing good, mortgage-paying jobs month after month, or those being hurt by Sask Party cuts to health care and education, growing wait times and class sizes?

Mr. Speaker, when will the Sask Party just admit that they were wrong, admit that they blew through the savings and wasted too many opportunities by helping their well-connected friends instead of Saskatchewan people? So, Mr. Speaker, again, when will that minister come clean and release the third quarter update?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — I just told her, Mr. Speaker, March 22nd we'll be releasing the third quarter update. What I would remind the member . . . I hope we can acknowledge in this House, Mr. Speaker, the facts of what we're dealing with in this province: \$1.2 billion in resource revenues down from two years ago. I hope that we can acknowledge that.

I hope we can also acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that if we don't control spending in this budget, if this is the new normal with respect to revenues, Mr. Speaker, if this is the new normal, we need to control spending in this province, Mr. Speaker. But what did we hear from the Finance critic just last June? On June 1st that Finance critic stood in her place, and I quote, she said, "A minimum of 6 per cent annual increase is needed just to maintain the status quo programs like health care and education."

Mr. Speaker, a 6 per cent increase in health care and education would be five . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . It's in *Hansard*. It's in *Hansard*. Table it? That's the quote from *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker. Maybe she needs to be reminded exactly what she said on budget day. I can send it over to you if you don't remember what you said on budget day.

You said a minimum of 6 per cent increases in health care and education are needed just to maintain the status quo. That's an extra \$500 million in spending, Mr. Speaker. Every single one of them over there, in this next session, every single day will

stand up and demand more spending, Mr. Speaker. Not going to happen.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Funding for Education Infrastructure

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, last week the people of Saskatoon Meewasin sent a message that they've had enough of the Sask Party's failure to accomplish the most basic tasks. The schools that serve Saskatoon Meewasin urgently require nearly \$3 million in roof repairs and replacements alone. In fact, according to the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, 75 per cent of the roofs in Saskatchewan schools will fail within the next five years.

This government can talk all it wants about how much they've spent in education. But it doesn't matter how much you study; it's whether you pass the test. Mr. Speaker, we're talking about kids' classrooms. That's foundational. Crumbling infrastructure makes it harder for students and teachers already trying to get by with growing class sizes and limited resources. So why, Mr. Speaker, does the Education minister think it's acceptable for students and teachers to pay the price for this government's mismanagement?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the new member to the Chamber. He is filling the shoes of Roger Parent, one of the finest MLAs we've had, and I'd like to remind him that they're very big shoes to fill and would like to urge him to stay on task. Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage him and wish him all the best in his leadership aspirations. I'm not as presumptuous as some people to call him the future leader but the potential future leader, and want to wish him well at that.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite raises issues with funding of schools. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this: that under the NDP, the amount of money they provided for preventative maintenance and repairs: zero. Mr. Speaker, under this government over the last four years, \$97 million which went for roofs and other such cares and repairs.

Mr. Speaker, they talk about things that are four, five, and six years out. We will look after things as they come along, and we've increased it each and every year from their zero.

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

Support for Education

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, instead of pointing fingers and trying to distract, maybe they should pay attention to what's going on with our children's education: crumbling schools, increased crowding, and fewer and fewer resources in our classrooms — all of this, Mr. Speaker, despite years of record revenues. And instead of trying to find real solutions for these problems, they're only making them worse by threatening to upend the system, getting rid of elected trustees.

Mr. Speaker, I've travelled the province speaking with teachers, parents, community leaders, and I can tell you that support for keeping local voice in education is overwhelming. Even the Premier has admitted that there's concern around an appointed board system. Concern. I'll say.

So will this minister commit to stopping the cuts, supporting local voice, and working with instead of against locally elected boards to ensure that our kids are getting the education that they deserve?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has made a bigger commitment to education than any time in the history of the province. Mr. Speaker, capital for our students and our schools over the last nine years: \$1.4 billion, 428 per cent more than the NDP. Forty new schools, 25 major renovations.

We created preventative maintenance and renewal which is something that did not exist under the NDP. We created emergent funding — zero under the NDP. What's the NDP record? They closed 176 schools and shipped those students to Alberta.

[14:45]

Mr. Speaker, we're committed to Saskatchewan. We're committed to Saskatchewan students, and we are committed to Saskatchewan teachers.

The Speaker: — Orders of the day. Written questions. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — No, sorry, Mr. Speaker, I don't have any written questions. I do have a motion though.

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — To move a motion, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I believe the Government House Leader's asked leave to make said motion. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

MOTIONS

Leave of Absence

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move the following motion:

That leave of absence be granted to the member of Regina Rochdale for Monday, March 6, 2017 to Thursday, March 9, 2017 to attend the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians steering committee meeting and the Equal Voice daughters of the vote initiative 2017 in Ottawa, Ontario on behalf of this Assembly.

The Speaker: — 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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 235 through 246.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled responses to questions 235 to 246.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 44 — *The Water Security Agency Amendment Act, 2016*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Environment.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to water management and amendments we propose to *The Water Security Agency Act* and, after these remarks, I will move second reading to *The Water Security Agency Amendment Act, 2016*.

Mr. Speaker, water is very important for the future of our province. Water is essential for our continued growth and our quality of life. In 2012 our government, along with the Water Security Agency, began consulting widely on water management priorities and developed the 25-year Saskatchewan water security plan.

Mr. Speaker, since 2012 we have made significant progress on the agricultural water management issues, and the 25-year water security plan continues to guide our work. Each year we publish a progress report on our work under the plan. This plan made commitments to areas no other government in the province's history has done. One of those is agricultural water management.

With respect to the agricultural water management strategy, the plan is committed to enhancing responsible and organized agricultural drainage. The Water Security Agency, with significant help from the Ministry of Agriculture, has made substantial progress in addressing drainage regulations and policy in the province of Saskatchewan.

Following our extensive consultations, the Water Security Agency announced a new approach to drainage in Saskatchewan with the agricultural water management strategy

in 2015. The strategy is based on two crucial points on which there was broad consensus during our consultations. The first is that agricultural drainage has many benefits and is an important and necessary tool for our Saskatchewan producers. The second is that drainage must be controlled and it must be organized. The agricultural water management strategy is therefore committed to proactive action on agricultural drainage, something that no government in the last 35 years has done.

With regulations introduced in September of 2015, we have moved from a complaint-based system to a permit-based system where all drainage works need adjacent landowner permission and an approval to deliver that water into an adequate outlet. An adequate outlet is a stream or water body that can safely accept the water. Over time, the strategy will result in effective agricultural water management that allows and facilitates drainage and reduces the negative consequences.

Under Saskatchewan's agricultural water management strategy, controlled and organized drainage by our rural landowners ensures agricultural producers become part of our water management solutions. The previous complaint system was the subject of considerable criticism, including that of the Provincial Ombudsman. The Ombudsman issued a number of recommendations, along with the report on a file from a long-standing drainage complaint.

I'm proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that all recommendations were effectively addressed with the creation of the agricultural water management strategy even prior to the Ombudsman's report. The new approach to drainage effectively addresses the concerns raised in the report by either requiring a permit, with the possible installation of gates, or closure back to natural spill levels of some drainage works in a timely manner.

The whole process has been streamlined and will mean quicker resolution for producers and better water management for all. A request for assistance replaces the previous formal complaint process, which could take up to two years or longer before a resolution could take place. Under the new changes, Water Security Agency estimates it can deal with a request for assistance within 90 days or less.

The goal is to have permitted, controlled, and organized drainage across the province that mitigates impacts to other landowners and the environment. The online consultation which started our development of the agricultural water management strategy was the most comprehensive public consultation on drainage policy ever undertaken in the province of Saskatchewan. The online consultation took place from October 2013 to April 2014 and attracted nearly 500 participants who discussed various options for managing drainage in the province. The majority of the participants were from the agricultural sector, but conservation groups, local government, and industry were also represented.

In 2015, we then met with 15 agricultural and environmental and municipal groups, and they were as follows: the Western Barley Growers Association, the Sask Oat Development Commission, the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association, SaskCanola, the Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Association, the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, Canadian Cattlemen's Association, the

Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, the Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Saskatchewan Environmental Society, the Saskatchewan Conservation and Development Association, the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, and the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association.

Key messages that we heard from many of these participants included this: broad agreement that drainage provides many benefits to agricultural producers but, if the negative impacts of drainage cannot be mitigated, drainage activities should not be allowed; broad support for implementing regulations that are risk based where drainage activities of a larger scale or those that pose a greater risk require more stringent oversight; general agreement for those who benefit from drainage projects should bear the costs for building and maintaining such projects; and general agreement from all that existing, non-approved projects need to be brought into the regulatory system; consistent support for increased compliance and enforcement including the use of increased fines and closure of drainage works in cases where the project has not received prior approval; mixed support for requiring the maintenance of some wetlands. Some producers feel that they should receive some sort of compensation to retain such wetlands.

The advice has been incorporated into the agricultural water management strategy and informed development of regulations and projects. In September of 2015 we created new regulations governing drainage. This regulatory change was the first step in a new approach to drainage that we indicated would include policy changes as well as legislative changes.

Mr. Speaker, since the announcement in the fall of 2015, we have made significant progress in implementing the agricultural water management strategy, and we've started work in two pilot areas to test the application of this new approach and these new regulations. We developed the use of qualified persons to help prepare the applications. We now combine three separate approvals into one to simplify the process. We moved from asking for separate applications to seeking group applications from all of the landowners in one drainage works.

The requirement of an approval is to ensure that the province and the producers organize projects to reduce negative consequences such as downstream flooding and degradation of water quality, while providing the opportunity for the landowner to safely move water now and the security for that landowner of knowing that they may into the future. This is how we will ensure that drainage achieves the benefits desired without creating costs and problems for those downstream. In short, Mr. Speaker, it's how we will ensure that drainage in the province of Saskatchewan is responsible.

Mr. Speaker, this approach is working, and I recently announced that we issued an approval for the Dry Lake drainage project in the Gooseberry Lake watershed in southeastern Saskatchewan. This is a very large project that involves 73 landowners working together, covering 18,000 acres. And, Mr. Speaker, the scale of this project shows how complex these drainage networks have become. The project includes future drainage and all existing drainage works and will create major benefits for producers by securing land control

and approvals for their drainage works. Downstream landowners and the environment will also benefit through the inclusion of flow controls and the retention of wetlands.

Under the old system, Mr. Speaker, each of those 73 landowners would have needed to obtain three permits: an approval to construct, an approval to operate, and an aquatic habitat protection permit. And we were able to streamline the application system, requiring one permit for all 73 landowners.

The project allows control of how much and when water can be released from these 18,000 acres by including 30 gated structures which will control releases of water to the equivalent of a 1 in 2 year flow rate.

The 30 flow controls for existing drainage are intended to ensure that downstream landowners and communities will not experience increased flooding. These flow controls have already been constructed and are providing protection to those downstream landowners now.

This project also restored 34 acres of wetlands on existing drainage and includes 21 acres of wetland retention on planned new drainage, retaining water on the landscape and benefiting wildlife.

Landowners are now working, and need to continue to work co-operatively on drainage issues. This will ensure the mutual benefit from the security of having their works approved and moving water in a responsible fashion.

It's important to note that a project of this magnitude would not have been so successful without the use of local knowledge offered by landowners and others. The local Upper Souris Watershed did a lot of groundwork on this particular project, talking to landowners and explaining the benefits of the joint drainage project.

Using the watershed association as their qualified person to assist with the application process, this group of landowners and agricultural producers were able to work together to the benefit of all.

It's imperative that local knowledge is utilized. Individuals that know the lay of the land and where and how the water flows will be a major part of the success of large drainage projects just such as this.

Mr. Speaker, the Water Security Agency is currently working with hundreds of other landowners on an additional 12 organized drainage projects making up more than 160,000 acres. As these projects are completed, the Water Security Agency will move on to additional areas. Local groups will have the flexibility and tools that they need to solve together the needs of the community for drainage in a positive way through organizations such as joint applications, conservation and development authorities, and watershed associations.

Mr. Speaker, I provide this background on our initiative around drainage because the amendments proposed in Bill 44 are primarily designed to support and strengthen the agricultural water management strategy and those regulations from 2015. Most importantly, the amendment would replace the existing

formal drainage complaint process with a new request for assistance process.

[15:00]

The formal drainage complaint process was developed in a period when the province did not enforce the requirement that drainage be approved and instead focused efforts on resolving complaints of damage between neighbours. It was a multi-step process which included a request for assistance, a formal complaint, an appeal to the Water Appeal Board, and then the Court of Queen's Bench. And this process, Mr. Speaker, often took two to three years.

The drainage complaint process required intensive and expensive investigations by the Water Security Agency to determine if damage was occurring, and efforts to mediate a settlement between neighbours. It was not based on a regulatory requirement that all drainage requires approval and did little, if anything, to advance the agricultural water management in the province. Under the old drainage complaint process, each complaint used large amounts of resources. This is a significant cost to taxpayers for very modest water management benefits.

Mr. Speaker, it's our goal to redirect the time of those very knowledgeable staff to working proactively with landowners to bring their drainage works into compliance by licensing their works and producing more approvals like the dry lake project, which has lasting benefits for the landowners as well as those that live downstream.

To illustrate this point, Mr. Speaker, consider that during the fiscal year, Water Security Agency has been applying the new approach to requests for assistance and has completed 181 requests for assistance. As of today there have been no formal complaints arising from these requests, which would have happened previously.

While each situation is different, it can be assumed that the average requests, many of which would have led to a formal complaint and a possible appeal, could use four to five more days of staff time under the previous process than would be required under this new process. This means a savings of about 1,100 days of staff time. Mr. Speaker, that time — the equivalent of five full-time employees — can be redirected to working with landowners to submit applications, and to get approvals that work with the long-term water management benefit. In addition to those 181 people requesting assistance, they would get resolution of their problem within a few months as opposed to two to three years.

Under the new process, if there is a request for assistance, the Water Security Agency will determine if the alleged works are present and if they have an approval. If the works are present and do not have an approval, Water Security Agency will recommend the owner obtain an approval, or ultimately those works could be closed.

To obtain an approval the drainer must have adequate land control to bring the water to an adequate outlet. And if that requires crossing their neighbour's land, they will need to work together. Either way, the downstream complainant's issue will be resolved, and it will be resolved in a few months rather than

years, a very significant change in client service.

The Water Appeal Board, Mr. Speaker, is made up of six members from different constituencies across Saskatchewan, appointed by the Minister of Environment. Since 2003 there have been 138 complaints to the Water Security Agency, 31 of which were appealed to the Water Appeal Board. Only two cases out of 138 have been overturned, and five have been altered in some minor manner.

This means about 1.45 per cent of the cases that went to the board for an appeal were overturned and the rest were either affirmed or dismissed. This data shows that since 2003, 98.55 per cent of the Water Security's decisions were upheld or altered in some minor way by the Water Appeal Board. With the removal of the formal complaint process, the ability to appeal to the Water Appeal Board will not be necessary and it will be removed.

Appeals to the Water Appeal Board dealt with the Water Security Agency's assessment of damage and follow-up orders during the formal appeal process. The proposed new request for assistance process does not assess damages. The assessment is whether disputed works are present and whether they have approvals. It's quite black and white. Once Bill 44 is passed, the Water Appeal Board will complete the appeals before it but no new appeals will come to it.

Mr. Speaker, it's perhaps worth noting that historically, appeals create significant costs and they delay implementation of decisions intended to resolve local flood problems. A large portion of Water Security Agency's regional staff time was being taken up with the formal complaint process and appeals.

Mr. Speaker, the changes in the complaint process will result in significant productivity gains for the Water Security Agency, allowing those agency staff to improve services to those citizens requesting assistance because they're able to get some resolution of the issue much faster instead of having to endure a two- or a three-year process. This will allow Water Security Agency to use its resources to get its works organized and allow Water Security Agency to use its resources to get works approved.

In place of an appeal board, we will develop two advisory boards to support this strategy. One will be comprised of stakeholders representing the various interest groups, which will be consulted on policy and development and refinement of the strategy as we move forward. The first advisory board will focus on providing advice to the Water Security Agency on policy development to further our water management strategy.

An example would be to have this board look at principles around what constitutes an adequate outlet or the infill policy on small-acre sloughs and what requirements or permissions a landowner may need or may not need if they want to infill small sloughs.

The other board will be a technical review body to act as an independent appeal of some of the decisions relating to approvals. For example, if a landowner disagrees with adequacy of an outlet, they would have the ability to bring the technical work to a review body and the technical review body would use

this information to determine if the outlet is adequate or not. Mr. Speaker, these amendments will provide a forum to landowners to review Water Security Agency decisions if they're unsatisfied, without a great deal of cost and without a great deal of delay.

Mr. Speaker, an amendment to section 88 would remove Water Security Agency's power to act as a mediator in damage disputes. We want Water Security Agency to focus on the many aspects of water management, not on disputes.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments I have discussed primarily deal with agricultural drainage. The final major change is important to all aspects of water management, not just drainage. I refer to the proposed amendment to increase the maximum fine applicable under the Act. The current maximum fine under *The Water Security Agency Act* is \$10,000, and this level has been in place for 34 years.

The proposed amendment would set the maximum fine at \$1 million, which is the same level as those under *The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2010*. Fines under this Act could apply to drainage but also to other situations such as an industry using water without a permit and impacting the water supply for other users, or to someone constructing a dam or altering a stream course without a permit. Such actions could have significant public impacts and require a substantial deterrent.

Mr. Speaker, these same fine levels have been proposed because the management of water is a crucial part of the environmental management, essential to health, safety, economic growth, and the environment. Further, *The Environmental Management and Protection Act* regulates some aspects of water management such as waste water, industrial discharges, and aquatic habitat. Fines of up to \$1 million already apply to that part of water management. And as you know, Mr. Speaker, actual fines would not be determined by the Water Security Agency, but they are set by a judge and depend on the seriousness of the infraction.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments to *The Water Security Agency Act* will strengthen our approach to agricultural drainage in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan's ag water management strategy will provide the opportunity for agricultural producers to be considered as part of the downstream solution. The amendments support the regulatory reforms we introduced in 2015, which are showing positive impacts in our province.

Mr. Speaker, thank you, and I now move second reading of *The Water Security Agency Amendment Act, 2016*.

The Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Water Corporation has moved second reading of Bill No. 44, *The Water Security Agency Amendment Act, 2016*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand again in my place to give the initial comments as it relates to Bill No. 44, *The Water Security Agency Amendment Act*.

Now, Mr. Speaker, obviously the work to begin to resolve the matters as it pertains to agricultural drainage has been going on for quite some time. There's no question that the process that's undertaken to address this issue has to be very complex. We also have to ensure that there are proper resources to address some of the challenges and some of the issues as it pertains to drainage on agricultural lands. There's no question, Mr. Speaker, that this is a very complex and very daunting task ahead of the minister and certainly ahead of the Sask Party government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, over the years we've been privy to a number of complaints as it relates to drainage of agricultural lands, and it is a fairly complex matter as I indicated a few seconds ago. And why is it complex, Mr. Speaker? Because when you look at the whole notion around drainage, we're not simply talking one or two ditches. We're talking major ditches. We're simply not talking about using a backhoe to do a few areas of drainage.

Mr. Speaker, some of the drainage strategies and plan of landowners throughout the province has been very, very complex. It has been very grand, where you're seeing large backhoes and Cats being used to drain land from various parts of the province. Now what that does, Mr. Speaker, is simply transfers the water problem from one particular landowner downstream to another landowner or perhaps to a water body or perhaps to a neighbouring community or neighbouring village, and even so far as to say, Mr. Speaker, that this may even affect your neighbouring provinces.

And I was of course very honoured and pleased to attend with the current critic of the Environment, the member from Saskatoon Nutana, in which we toured various parts of our province looking at the various challenges as it pertains to flooding. And one particular area we visited, Mr. Speaker, was Yorkton. We had the opportunity to visit Yorkton, and not only did we visit the small villages around Yorkton but we actually travelled into the community and into the countryside to see the effects of the excess water at the time and all the impacts it was having on the various family farms and certainly the various communities and, Mr. Speaker, the individual landowners.

Now when we looked to the province and to the government for resolution to this, we didn't realize that it was going to take a full five years, from 2012 to 2017, to begin to implement and to begin to recognize that this problem was certainly occurring all throughout the province of Saskatchewan.

Now as you look at the eastern part of Saskatchewan, the southeastern part, Mr. Speaker, they have had complex water management problems for years and years and years. And I can remember attending one particular farmhouse in which we were told to make sure we followed the pilot vehicle ahead of us because the landowner knew exactly where the road was, because if you veered a couple of feet off the road on either side, well guess what? You were into eight, nine feet of water. It was that complex and that dangerous. And while the road itself was maybe 100 yards long, there was a slough on either side of the road, and that was the family's only access onto their property. So every day the homeowner, the landowner had to manoeuvre through this road that was hidden by water. And thank goodness we were able to follow him safely, because if we were out 2 feet on either side of this road covered with

water, Mr. Speaker, we were into a slough, and that was a very deep slough.

So this is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a minor problem. As I mentioned at the outset, the whole issue around agricultural drainage, illegal agricultural drainage, is creating a huge, massive problem all throughout the province of Saskatchewan. And it was with a lot of optimism that we looked at some of the efforts undertaken to try and consult with the various organizations and various people involved with the agricultural drainage matter. And, Mr. Speaker, to say the least, we were quite disappointed that the fact that this strategy wasn't as grand and certainly wasn't a finale to what the issues that many people spoke to us about, as to what the solutions might be to this very complex issue.

Now we within the NDP circles know a couple of things when it comes to solutions. Number one is we've got to address the whole notion of the tripartite agreement between Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Now this goes much deeper than agricultural lands in terms of drainage, Mr. Speaker, because we . . . always you have to have a shared water strategy as Western provinces, and we do have that agreement in place.

[15:15]

The problem we have, Mr. Speaker, is that we need to make sure that the Saskatchewan Party government connect all the moving parts as it pertains to water management. Connect them all together to have the solution in place and not piecemeal the approach, not have a piecemeal approach that we're seeing from time to time on this particular matter. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because it affects agriculture and agriculture's a mainstay of Saskatchewan's economy. And what is happening is if you don't deal with the water issue to the extent that you should, then, Mr. Speaker, what it creates is it creates a lot of anger amongst neighbours. It creates a lot of anger amongst communities. It creates a lot of anger amongst even the partner provinces as it pertains to water quality and water sharing rights, Mr. Speaker.

Now as we toured the Yorkton area, we came across a number of examples of how if you do not resolve the matter, if you do not begin the process of connecting all the major parts of a water strategy, a comprehensive water strategy, Mr. Speaker, what is going to happen is you're going to waste a lot of resources.

I can tell you that we went down to one particular home which was flooded, and then the insurance companies come in there and they refixed the walls in the basement and everything was fine. And then the following spring, the same house flooded again. And again, Mr. Speaker, they had to get insurance back in there, and this time I think the province had to pay some of those dollars to rebuild that house when the solution from that small community was to build a proper drainage pipe about a kilometre down the road, which may have cost a couple of hundred thousand dollars. But, Mr. Speaker, that would have taken the water away. And that water that came back the second year not only displaced that family from their home but again wasted a lot of valuable resources.

So some of these communities come forward with solutions,

and that's why consultation is the keyword that I always pick up when we hear from the Sask Party on some of these processes that are under way. When we look at some of the grievances and tour some of the family farms that are impacted by this on a continual basis, it's not a one-year or two-year deal, Mr. Speaker. This happens every single year where there are problems with water drainage and how to resolve the matter. And we want to make sure that if there's consultations under way, I think consultations should have the premise of agreement as well.

And this is why it's important to have organizations like SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association], like SARM, like the Agricultural Producers Association, and all the people involved with rural Saskatchewan that have a say, and certainly have a stake as it pertains to the management of our water, which as the minister alluded to is really important not only to human survival and health, but to the survival of our economy, and more in particular the survival and strengthening of the agricultural economy.

So I think it is really quite straightforward in the sense of what we would like to see as the opposition. And one of the things that we want to see is that grand vision, a totally encompassing vision on how we deal with this matter once and for all.

But unfortunately, as I mentioned at the outset, Mr. Speaker, the devil's in the detail. The devil's in the detail. If the minister is serious about dealing with the water management strategy that he's alluded to in this particular bill, then it all comes down to resources. How many dollars and how much of their resources are they prepared to invest into this particular exercise? That remains the question, Mr. Speaker. And this is why it's important that we have an opposition that says, okay fine, you're taking baby steps on this challenge, but do you have the proper dollars in place to at least achieve those baby steps, Mr. Speaker.

And this is where we have to be able to look at the budget and say to the people that may be impacted by this that no, they didn't take the necessary large steps, but the baby steps that they're prepared to take, they didn't offer the proper resources to that. And this is where, Mr. Speaker, this is where it's really important that people pay attention.

Now from what I understand from my vantage point is this party is broke, Mr. Speaker. Their financial ship is sinking and the people of Saskatchewan see it. They know it. They see cuts all over the place. The minister has alluded to this from time to time. We've seen the deficit balloon from a \$400 million fictional figure to now to 1.6, 1.8, and the price tag is going up.

So just how important is the agricultural water security agency amendment Act, the finances necessary to put some of those issues to rest? How important is that against the ballooning \$2 billion deficit that this particular party has foisted onto the people of Saskatchewan? This is where, Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important that we pay attention to the details in the budget as to how they're wishing to finance the proper staff, the proper time, into achieving some of the objectives outlined in the minister's bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the water strategy that we're

undertaking as a province to deal with drainage, a lot of people may not know this because a lot of the lay people don't really . . . and are not privy, don't have the research ability, don't have the dollars to do all that research properly. And they don't, of course, know all the issues around the three provinces' water management agreement.

But what happens in this case is that you look at southeastern Saskatchewan, in particular the Yorkton area. In our tour, we saw that a lot of the water being drained off this agricultural land was going into rivers and streams. And some had good ideas into how we could conserve that water. Yet the vast majority of the water that was simply being channelled into the river and streams basically flowed eastward and went into the province of Manitoba into the Winnipeg area and into the Red River area. Now that is simply transferring the problem to the province of Manitoba.

So now Manitoba, of course, is not too happy about that particular problem. They understand what is happening on the Saskatchewan side. And then, of course, tensions build up and tempers flare and people often get angry with each other. And that's kind of what my point is, Mr. Speaker, is that there are a lot of complex, large, massive agreements that must be incorporated into any water management plan that we have, in particular as it pertains to Bill No. 44.

And this is why resources are important to be afforded to the Department of the Environment to make sure that the objectives outlined in this critical piece of environmental monitoring, and that's of course around the water area . . . And, Mr. Speaker, that's where I think people of Saskatchewan will be able to tell whether this government's serious about dealing with this particular matter or not. It is a complex, large issue that needs a lot of attention and a lot of resources. And, unfortunately, from my perspective, Mr. Speaker, I don't see the dollar figure attached to the intent behind this bill, and this is the part that's really important to us as the opposition.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there was a number of changes in this particular bill that are supposed to streamline the process. And that's why I go back to the resource matter I discussed earlier. And you have to be very careful here because people are naturally very protective of their land. They are very, very protective of their land, and throughout my tenure as the minister of the Environment, Mr. Speaker, we sensed that natural protection of your turf, of your home, of your land. And there's no question about that, Mr. Speaker, that that is something that is ingrained in a lot of the people that own land throughout the province. And more important, it's ingrained in the agricultural community.

Now what happens, Mr. Speaker, is that the agricultural community or the landowner or the farmer, if you will, well they don't like government coming there and giving a bunch of rules and regulations. They just don't like that, Mr. Speaker. Now what happens now in this case? And that's why I go back to the process of the proper resources, the proper consultation, and the proper agreements.

Now what happens, Mr. Speaker, is that when you expand the Water Security Agency's authority to do things on private lands, well that's creating a whole different mixed bag of

problems, Mr. Speaker, and you look at some of the decisions around this. There's no question that when you look at expanding the Water Security Agency's ability to recover cost, to enter lands with machinery, to enforce an order to the watershed security agency, Mr. Speaker, these are all confrontational language and wording that I think that ought not to be in there and should not be necessary if we have the word "agreement" replaced with "consultation."

If we sit down and deal with the issues in a very concise and clear, respectful process with the landowners, I think, Mr. Speaker, that that's probably . . . What has better served the interests of the people of Saskatchewan if we have these kind of even regional agreements with the landowners to make sure that there isn't confrontation because I can tell you that a lot of farmers in our province really are very protective of their lands.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've also had the pleasure of signing off on some lands, agricultural lands, that were donated to the Department of the Environment or to the province of Saskatchewan and her people. Some of the lands were donated by some of the families that owned the land, and what they also indicated to us at the time was that we will donate the land to the province but only for environmental purposes which means that they wanted this land for habitat purposes, or for wetlands conservation, or for flora or fauna conservation, wildlife ecosystems. The list goes on as to what some of these farm families really wanted their land to be used for.

So it comes to the environmental integrity, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to protection of their land, these are values that are ingrained in many of our farm families in Saskatchewan. And that's why it is better to have a co-operative, cohesive approach to dealing with some of these issues as opposed to the aggressive approach that sometimes are misinterpreted by landowners when the government comes along and starts enforcing some of the orders as identified under Bill. No. 44.

So I would caution the minister. I would caution the Sask Party government that to my perspective, to my perspective, that we have to be very careful on this front. Because obviously, I think and we believe and I've been privy to a lot of discussions from many of the folks in our area that come from family farms, that were raised in rural Saskatchewan, and they speak of the value of the land. They speak about the value of the agricultural economy. They speak of the importance of protecting the environment. These are all values that the people of Saskatchewan have. And that's why it's important to use those values for all of our benefit to make sure we all are conserving water in a very cohesive and intelligent matter because it's so important, as I mentioned, to life itself, but more important, just as important to wildlife and of course to the agricultural economy.

So, Mr. Speaker, this whole motion on an agricultural water strategy is a vital piece on how we deal with this matter for years and years and years to come. It is not a single step in five years, Mr. Speaker. It is not a baby step in seven years. It is really, as I've said time and time again, time for a comprehensive strategy in Saskatchewan when it comes to illegal drainage of agricultural lands. It is a symptom of the problem of non-planning by governments, especially by the Saskatchewan Party government, because they have not

resolved the issue as it should be. And, Mr. Speaker, that is something that needs to be addressed ASAP [as soon as possible].

Now some of the closing comments I have on this particular bill, Mr. Speaker, is if you look at the whole notion of, on one hand, we could get less water from Alberta in any given three- or four-year time frame, on the other hand we could be flooding Manitoba with a lot of excess water. On one hand, we can find certain areas of our province that are parched for water while other areas are not; they're actually flooded. And you see these cycles repeat itself day after day and year after year.

And yet the government, with their record revenues, refused to deal with this matter when they had the opportunity to. And here we are a full five years later, they're finally starting to get some baby steps in place. But then again we go back to saying, okay, if the baby steps are what you want to undertake, where's the resources for that? And that's where you begin to get the devil in the detail as it pertains to whether they're financing the resources properly from, what I think, the Finance minister's poorly managed financial plan that the people of Saskatchewan entrusted them with.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're hearing each day that that debt and that deficit is climbing, continues to climb. And, Mr. Speaker, that's a crying shame because at one time, Saskatchewan, not more than three or four years ago had record revenue, a booming economy, and somehow the Saskatchewan Party found a way in which it could mess all that up. And now they've compromised our future, and now, Mr. Speaker, they have — no question in my mind — compromised our children's future.

[15:30]

And now they're finally dealing with some of the issues around water security, and again they don't have the resources to make sure that some of the objectives that have been outlined in this particular bill can be accomplished with a bit of progress.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've alluded a bit about the drainage issue. I've alluded a bit about the three provinces' agreement. I spoke about the value of the farm family in rural Saskatchewan as it pertains to protection of the environment. I've spoke about the importance of water to the agricultural economy. I've spoken on the importance of consultation should be construed as agreement which is not the case. I've spoken about the time in which it took to get this bill into place and to make these baby steps.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is really, really important that the whole illegal drainage issue of agricultural lands need to be addressed. As an opposition we understand that. We have toured the communities, and we have saw the devastating effect not only on the lands and the economy of our agricultural component of the province, but it really creates bad neighbours. And we've seen that time and time again.

We have got to provide solid leadership, visionary leadership, and a complex solution to a complex problem. I don't see any evidence of that in this particular bill, Mr. Speaker, especially when we're finding out that this government's broke. So you

can have all the good intentions in the world with bills of this sort, but if they don't have the proper resources then we're wasting our time and breath on bills of this nature. And this is where I think it's important as an opposition we explain to people why we propose some of the ideas we have and why we think it's important to argue and debate these bills as it pertains to illegal drainage of our agricultural lands.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know my colleagues have a lot more to say about this particular bill. I look forward to their comments but certainly from our perspective they can add a lot more than I certainly can. And I'm looking forward to those comments because it is a very, very important matter to the people of Saskatchewan, and more particular to the agricultural sector of our great province of Saskatchewan.

So on that note I move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 44, *The Water Security Agency Amendment Act*.

The Speaker: — The member from Athabasca has moved that Bill No. 44, *The Water Security Agency Amendment Act, 2016* be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 40

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wyant that **Bill No. 40 — *The Interpretation Amendment Act, 2016/Loi modificative de 2016 sur l'interprétation*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Rancourt: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to stand here today and talk about Bill 40, *The Interpretation Amendment Act*. Mr. Speaker, this bill is a very small bill but it has a lot of possible implications. So I think it's really important that we talk about all the potential complications or the issues that might happen if this bill is passed.

And this bill in particular is a bill that is near and dear to my heart, Mr. Speaker, because I was a previous Crown employee and I always ensure that we use the services of our Crown corporations in our communities. And I think it's important that we look into this bill, and again it's important that we talk about how important our Crowns are. So if you don't mind, I wouldn't mind sharing a little bit of my personal experiences with regards to our Crown corporations.

So, Mr. Speaker, I was fortunate to work for both SaskTel and SaskPower. I was a single mother and my employment provided me the ability to be financially independent, Mr. Speaker. Crown corporations, they provide good-paying jobs for people in the community, and this allowed me to have

medical benefits for my family. And I was always treated as a valuable, professional employee while working with these organizations.

With my employment with the Crown corporations, it gave me the opportunity to own my own home, provide stability for my family, and be a contributing, strong member of my community. Working at these Crown corporations showed me how important our Crowns are to our province and to our communities. It showed me how important it is for the province to invest in good-paying jobs and ensuring that we have affordable services, and that how important province-owned businesses . . . how they invest back into our communities.

And so I was just at an event the other day, Mr. Speaker, and there was an individual who is now a retired SaskTel worker. He worked there for 30-some years and he's part of the SaskTel Pioneers, and he talked a little bit about what that organization is. And what they do, Mr. Speaker, is current employees, they donate a portion of their income to this Pioneers organization, and SaskTel matches their donations, and then they give that back to the communities. And this employee said that about 75 per cent of SaskTel employees are part of this, so they're giving their own money back to the communities. And whenever we have a fundraiser or an event going on, if we give a call to the SaskTel Pioneers, they get their workers out and they come and they volunteer. And so they're very dedicated to their organizations.

Mr. Speaker, through my employment with these Crown corporations I've seen first hand how employees will work hard for their community. I've seen SaskPower employees go out in ice storms and lightning storms to restore power for the members in the communities. And they work long hours alongside with the individuals in the office. And they do this because they know that the individuals in the communities are their neighbours, their family members, and that they need to have their power restored. So they work hard for that.

I've seen SaskEnergy staff securing locations to ensure that the community is safe. And I've seen Liquor and Gaming staff act professionally towards individuals with addictions issues and ensuring that they get the support they need in the community. These are professional employees and they work hard with what they do and they're dedicated.

And after I was involved in a car accident, I really saw first hand. The SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] staff handled the situations professionally in a timely fashion. They ensured that I got my medical needs met. They ensured that all of my needs for my vehicle and everything were met as well. And they were really kind and compassionate and I really appreciate what they've done for me.

So, Mr. Speaker, Crown corporation employees, they go above and beyond because they're invested in their communities. They know that the people they serve are their neighbours, their friends, and even their family, so they're dedicated to provide the best service for them.

So when I look at this bill, Mr. Speaker, and I see how with passing of this bill that we make it possible for the government to easily sell 49 per cent of our Crowns without regarding a

mandate from the people of Saskatchewan, this troubles me because I don't know exactly how many people in the province know that this bill is coming forward. And I know for a fact that the people that I've talked . . . Through the break that we've had, on the doorsteps in Meewasin during the by-election, we went to town halls and talked to different people across the province. People are concerned about this, and people care about their Crown corporations. And we heard that from our Premier, you know, just earlier on today, how he said that, you know, he's also heard the concerns about this, you know. And so I don't think it's fair for us to be looking at potentially passing a bill of this magnitude that could change the definition of privatization, and just underhandedly pass this. So it's changing the requirement. So if there wasn't concerns about this, we wouldn't be vocalizing them.

So I think it's also important, Mr. Speaker, to talk about the history of our Crowns and why they were created. And we know that in Saskatchewan we've got a large province, a large geographic area, and we have a small population compared to other provinces, you know. And so to provide those necessary services to different areas in the different communities, we went to creating our Crowns because we knew that we had to provide power and other services to our rural communities, our remote communities. And if government created those businesses that provided those services, we could provide them in a cost-effective way, that we would also create employment, stable employment within our province, and also provide these services to the people that need it throughout our province. So it's important that we keep that in the forefront of our minds when we think about keeping our Crowns.

And also I think it's important, when we look at the history, that we look at some of the previous governments that wanted to maybe do some selling of our Crowns, you know, and privatizing of the services. And we know, and the previous government under Premier Devine, that they had a \$1.2 billion deficit in 1986-87, sounding a little bit familiar. And it was a far cry from the deficit figure that they presented, and they actually presented that pre-election. We didn't hear any of this information pre-election for us. The numbers started coming out after the election, but here when I do some research of 40 years ago or 30 years ago, they seem quite similar here. And so to try to recover from the deficit, they talked about cutbacks in services, cancellation of programs, and firing of employees. So we're hearing the same kind of message going through again here.

The privatization crusade started against the Crown corporations and we had different Crown corporations on the block. And we've been hearing different Crown corporations this time as well. We've been hearing SaskTel. We've been hearing SGI. We've been hearing a lot of the different Crowns being possibly on the block, you know. And so it seems like history is repeating itself here.

Also we know, in that government they gave loans to private businesses, you know. And so the motive there was privatization. And we saw also that they reduced social assistance payments and they wanted to curb the power of the labour unions, you know. And so again, when we look back in history, we see we're repeating ourselves a little bit. And you know, it's not as dangerous as wearing bell-bottoms. Like this

is serious stuff, you know, and this could potentially have long-term effects on our economy.

So again we've got to remember the reasons why we invest with our Crowns. I know with SGI, the money that we get from SGI, they pay for our highways and it's helped the province to diversify our economy, stabilize our economy, and it's oftentimes gotten us out of financial debt. And so when we make sure that our utilities are a reasonable price, that's important.

[15:45]

Our economy is basically made up of private, public, and co-operative services and, Mr. Speaker, when we eliminate one of those aspects it's going to be a devastating effect on our economy. We've already started seeing some privatization of our Crowns since this government's been elected, and so I want to talk a little bit about that. And again I don't think a majority of the people in the public know about this. In fact, like I said before, I'm a huge Crown corporation supporter and I wasn't fully aware of all of these areas that were privatized through the past 10 years, Mr. Speaker. And I just know that when I had my services upgraded in my own home that I was upset to see that the contractors were from out of province that were coming to install my services, where previously and normally it would be someone in my community that I knew was getting that work and those jobs.

So in May of 2008, SaskTel was forced to contract some of its installation services for SaskTel Max and high-speed Internet, and again a lot of those installation services are from out of province. In July 2008 the provincial government sold Saskferco to a Norwegian company. Again, more money going out of our country which had provided the province with \$209 million since the original investment in dividends. That's a lot of money that's going outside of our province, outside of our country now.

Then we saw big change in October 2008 when this provincial government announced its Saskatchewan-first policy for Crown corporations. And now, Mr. Speaker, that forced our Crowns to sell off and give away its out-of-province operations that had, until that point, generated money out of the province that we could use back in Saskatchewan.

So that's how you diversify your economy, Mr. Speaker, is you go outside. When you have a good service within your province, you reach out and you can provide it other places. And then you can get more money for the people of Saskatchewan. Good business owners would do that, and that's why good business owners are coming and buying up our services.

So this policy was meant to weaken our Crowns and make our Crowns look like they're not providing the appropriate service that we wanted, so that there would be a reason to sell them. We saw SaskTel outsource email and conference call services. SaskTel had to sell Navigata. SaskEnergy had to sell its 50 per cent stake in the Nova Scotia natural gas distribution business, and SaskTel had to give up its holdings in DirectWest Canada.

More and more I'm hearing, like people are asking, what about

SaskTel International? SaskTel International was an incredible service and was nationwide known and even provided services in France, I believe, that SaskTel was first with fibre optics. And our employees are exceptional, you know. And so we were able to provide services outside and bring that revenue back to our own province so that we could use it for services that we appreciate here, like with health care and education. And that's how you bring money back to your province . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . That's good. And I hope that we can expand on the Crowns, look at expanding them instead of looking at reducing them. Let's expand that, you know, and that'll help with our economy.

And all of these things that I was just talking about, those were all privatized in the first two years of the Sask Party government's mandate. So there's many other examples of this type of privatization where our Crowns are being hacked down and limit their capacity and ability to provide good returns.

So we also privatized the Information Services Corporation. And I actually had someone phone my office not too long ago, and it was a non-profit organization that had to get some information from the Information Services Corporation. And they were really astonished at how much it cost to get the information. And this individual said that previously when we owned, when we owned the Information Services Corporation, that those fees weren't that high. And you know, that's what happens when things become privatized. It becomes more expensive for the people of our province.

Also we had the Saskatchewan Communications Network pretty much given away, just given away like, and that was an important agency for our province. It provided information to everybody in our province. It was an effective network, and we really do miss that service.

And more recently this government has given away nearly 40 public liquor stores. Again, Mr. Speaker, given away these very profitable liquor stores — given away. Like what business, what organization just gives away very profitable organizations? And the funds from the profits from those liquor stores, they paid for our hospitals. They paid for our schools. They paid for our roads, and they kept our taxes lower. And, Mr. Speaker, like when they talk about, well where is the money coming from? Well quit getting rid of the money-making organizations in our province. That's where the money was supposed to be coming from.

So these revenues exist to pay for our expenses and if we give away a good chunk of these revenues by privatizing Crowns, then the expenses are still going to be there. They're not leaving. So how are we going to pay for them? Well guess what? The people of Saskatchewan are going to have to start paying for them, and they're going to have to start paying by having higher taxes. And that's how we keep our taxes low is to have these organizations that'll put money into our revenues.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's troubling when we know that there's already been levels of privatization within our government and our province, and now we have this bill sitting here, staring us in the face, saying let's do more. Let's privatize more.

So how are our Crowns a revenue for us? And this is right from

the Crown Investments Corporation annual report that, you know, almost \$300 million in dividends was paid back to the people of Saskatchewan, and so that's through all of our different Crowns. And yes, sometimes they have good years, sometimes they have bad years, but that's why you have the different sectors so that they could balance each other out, you know, and still provide that dividend back to the people of Saskatchewan.

And when I first started working with the Crown corporations, one of the staff told me, you are an employee to every person in this province and you keep yourself accountable to every person in this province. And I've held that true. And I believe that's even more so true for each individual member that's sitting here, and every person in this province is your boss. And I could tell you, the people of this province do not want to let go of our Crowns. And I encourage every person in this Assembly to go out and talk to people because I haven't heard one person say, I think this is a good idea. They are saying that they're worried about the potential sale of our Crowns, and even the 49 per cent of it because then we lose even more of those dividends going back to us and how that's going to impact our health, our education, and our roads, and everything we depend on.

So I want to talk about some of the individual Crown corporations. And first I'm going to talk about SaskTel because we've heard a lot of rumblings about that possibly being the potential Crown that we might sell. So SaskTel's low prices and outstanding coverage keeps competitors' prices down. So if you look at a basic home phone package, SaskTel, among other comparators, is extremely low especially across the province, you know. And so they make other agencies in our province have to stay to that level. So privatization of SaskTel would reduce the competition and drive these prices up for everyone.

Like I said before, SaskTel is well known of how much they provide in the community. In 2015-16, SaskTel donated \$3,665,043 to 1,041 non-profit and charitable organizations. Again, Mr. Speaker, that's over \$3 million that was donated by SaskTel to our non-profit and charitable organizations in our province. That's above the dividends, you know. So they provide that to non-profit and charitable organizations, community associations, venues, events, partnerships, and they reached out to 229 communities throughout this province.

They support Aboriginal cultural traditions like community development. They're committed to connecting with First Nations communities to the latest technology. So if we had private organizations, would they be as committed to ensuring that First Nations communities are receiving Internet and telephone services? I can't see that being a real mandate for a business that's relying on dollars. But when we have a business that's relying on services, providing good quality services, they ensure that those services are available.

And they're a proud sponsor to a lot of the local First Nations initiatives. They have I Am Stronger campaign, which is offering grants of up to \$1,000 for youth-led initiatives that address bullying, cyberbullying, and promote kindness. To date \$23,735 has been awarded to this important cause. This is above and beyond all the other things I've been talking about.

Phones for a Fresh Start, they properly recycle phones, and all the proceeds from the recycling process are used to support victims of domestic violence at the provincial association of transition homes and services of Saskatchewan.

SaskTel Pioneers, like I was talking about before, this network of current and former employees has raised approximately 200,000 annually for Saskatchewan communities and associations. They have telecare. Employees contribute to the fund through an automatic payroll deduction, and SaskTel donates an additional 50 cents for every dollar raised. So that's \$294,622 to 67 organizations in 2015-2016. And they've given out \$37,000 in education scholarships. So these are things that we would lose if we go to privatizing these services. So we need to take that into consideration.

Then we've got SGI. SGI is another major Crown corporation. This company achieved a profit of \$84.5 million, generating a dividend of 47.3 million for the people of Saskatchewan. The 2015 annual report says that the company employs more than 2,000 people, and SGI Canada has 211 independent brokers throughout Saskatchewan as well as 219 brokers operating in Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario.

And my understanding is that having SGI Canada go across the provinces really helps alleviate any potential . . . Like if we had say a natural disaster in Saskatchewan and a lot of people needed to utilize our insurance rates, making the insurance go outside of the province into other provinces help mitigate that damage that could happen to the insurance company. So it's really important to have this service provided, and I know a lot of people in other provinces that said that they've heard good things about SGI Canada and they'd like to see more of that. So that could potentially be something that we reach out a little bit further as well.

There was a survey that SGI Canada had sent out and it said that 94 per cent are satisfied with their services. That's an incredible amount, you know, like to have 94 per cent of people responding to the survey saying they are satisfied with that service. So they should be very proud of that.

[16:00]

And also the 2015 annual report says that SGI Canada continues to receive national recognition as the "Top 100 Employer, one of Canada's top diversity employers and one of Canada's top employers for employees over 40." So that's really impressive I have to say.

And with SaskEnergy, the residential customers pay the lowest cost for natural gas delivery in Canada, and SaskTel provides phone and Internet services to remote and rural Saskatchewan.

And STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] provides reliable bus service that connects 253 Saskatchewan communities. And, Mr. Speaker, STC is utilized by many people who are in rural communities that need to access services in larger facilities. I know a lot of seniors rely on this transportation company and that if we lose this company, seniors will really struggle with finding ways to move around the province and get to the larger facilities for their health services.

So we have got to really consider the potential issues if we privatize any of these services. So, Mr. Speaker, also like we've heard, like different things coming from this government, you know, and for the longest time they said that they wouldn't privatize any of our Crown corporations.

And so I want to refer back to some quotes that I've found. One will be from the 2011 election platform that the Saskatchewan Party had. And here it says that they'll:

Continue to support the Crown Corporations Public Ownership Act.

Ensure Saskatchewan's Crown utility corporations remain publicly owned and focused on delivering high quality service to Saskatchewan people at the lowest cost.

So that was an election promise from 2011. And so even in March prior to this election, there was some quotes from the Premier that said . . . Like he was pressed on the issue of with regards to the privatization agenda and the Premier himself said:

"There's something we signed on to called the Crown Corporation Protection Act, or to that effect. Basically, it protects Crowns from being privatized." . . . "If elected, we will make one change to that: that's to the liquor retailing in the province. And we've already announced that."

"With respect to the major Crowns, we will not be changing it if we're re-elected again."

So that in essence was an election promise that was given to the people of Saskatchewan, that they were upfront about the liquor store sales. And I'll agree that was public. Like people knew that was a potential consequence of electing a Sask Party government. But the people of Saskatchewan did not realize that the rest of the Crown corporations could result in some privatization.

And again like I said before, I think with the amendments to this bill that they need to consider that the people of the province don't really understand truly what the consequences of passing a bill like this is, and they should have the respect of having what our Premier also said here, a provincial referendum. If it was something Saskatchewan people we thought really wanted to at least talk about, there is the idea of a provincial referendum.

And so, you know, we need to take our elected officials' word. And so when something has been said, they should be honoured, you know. And so I would like to see that maybe the Premier have second thoughts about this bill and the potential consequences of it and retract it and decide that this may be something that all the residents of Saskatchewan should be made aware of.

So I also have from the previous minister responsible for SaskTel, or maybe he is the current one, I can't remember . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Okay, the current Minister Responsible for SaskTel, he also indicated to a letter of a concerned citizen that if there was any potential sale of SaskTel — and even 49 per cent is a potential sale, 5 per cent is a

potential sale, any percentage of that is a potential sale — that it would be done through a province-wide referendum. So we need for them to honour that.

And when we look at this bill, and it says 49 per cent of any of the Crown corporations could be potentially privatized with the new definition of privatization, that if they do say that, there's going to be a province-wide referendum, then let's go for that. Let's do it, and then put it to the people of Saskatchewan and let them have their voice.

So according to a May 17 *Leader-Post* story, the Premier said there are no plans to privatize SaskTel because his party didn't campaign on it and because of the current legislation. Maybe that's a discussion Saskatchewan people want to have. If it was something Saskatchewan people, we thought, really wanted to at least talk about, there's an idea of a provincial referendum. So yes, there's a lot of talk here. And with changes to the current legislation, like you can say that, but do everybody in the province understand what that means? And again, I don't think this is being upfront and honest.

Consequences of privatization, there's quite a few consequences. I could go on and on and on about it. So we're always talking about, you know, repairing our roads and infrastructure costs and such and, over the past six years, the Ministry of Highways budget has increased a modest 12 per cent. So how has spending on private consultants over the same period skyrocketed by a whopping 404 per cent?

So that's the cost of privatizing our highways. And so the more that we turn to private companies to work for the Ministry of Highways, they charge hourly rates that are often two to four times higher than a public service worker would be paid to do that same job. You know, so the costs aren't any cheaper, and we take away jobs from the people in Saskatchewan.

And I've had, I'm sure, and I hope a lot of other members here have had a lot of concerns and calls to their office from members that are working for organizations and concerned about the fact that their jobs may be lost after March 22nd. So I feel really bad for a lot of families who are really concerned about what they might need to do for their families, you know, if potentially a lot of our government jobs are contracted out, and again like I said, which haven't been proven to be cost effective.

Also I'm going to read a little bit of a quote here:

Public ownership is also preferable when delivering essential services. Writing in the context of power failures in . . . New Zealand following the privatization of electricity, journalist Will Hutton wrote:

"Electricity is not a commodity like a designer dress where an interruption of supply poses no wider consequences; it is a precondition for successful modern life. If the owner of the power and distribution system fails to maintain supply and so loses revenue, this is not just an issue for the shareholders of the enterprise. It is an issue for everyone. In economic terms, electricity is a public good. This means electricity companies — like water, gas and rail companies — cannot be run on the

same commercial terms as firms in markets where there are many suppliers and the consequences of poor decision making are restricted to the firms themselves.”

Public ownership also makes sense where large-scale capital investments in energy, transportation, or communication infrastructure are necessary. Because the government enjoys a better credit rating than private corporations, Crown corporations can borrow money at more favourable interest rates and can finance such projects more cheaply than the private sector. Public ownership also shares the risks and equalizes the costs of such important investments among all those who benefit from them. Citizens similarly share the benefits derived from such investments. Rather than seeking to maximize shareholder profits, Crown corporations try to guarantee access to their services at the lowest possible cost. For instance, Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI) provides the lowest auto insurance rates in the country, while SaskEnergy offers the lowest costs for natural gas in all of Canada. Moreover, when Crown corporations have particularly profitable years they may also provide rebates to customers or return revenue to the public purse, such as when Crown dividends have been used to balance the provincial budget.

Because they are accountable to the public as a whole, Crown corporations’ economic focus is much broader than that of private corporations that must maximize short-term profitability. Crown corporations can consider the economic effects of their operations on local economies and the province as a whole when making strategic decisions. Crown policies such as local hiring preferences, local procurement practices or community investments are some examples.

So it just makes financial sense to keep the Crown corporations that we have in the hands of the people of Saskatchewan for many reasons. And a lot were described in that section that I just quoted because it just makes more financial sense. We can have control of services that are a necessity for the people of the province. We provide good-paying, stable jobs for the people of this province. And we also can benefit from years that are very profitable, and we can use that to be invested in other areas of our province. So that’s one of the big things.

We also learned that if we do sell even 10 per cent of our Crown corporation, that our federal taxes will be raised and then we’ll be sending more money to Ottawa. And I know that nobody here wants to send more money to Ottawa. So that also really doesn’t make much sense.

And also when we’re sending jobs out of the province, we want to keep people employed here, keep people investing in other services here, and keep our communities strong. And also when we own these Crown corporations, they’re open and transparent and the people of Saskatchewan know exactly where their money is going. Because, like I said before, because they own, they own this company. They own the Crown corporations.

So selling off our Crowns will not solve the Sask Party’s mismanagement. It won’t save us from their scandals, and it won’t bring an end to Sask Party waste. What it will do is take

away, take our control away from our Crowns, and it’ll mean that we’ll lose our lower rates, the better service, and the jobs. We’re going to lose those mortgage-paying jobs, profits from the Crowns, and that will be devastating.

[16:15]

The dividends from our Crowns should go to the people of Saskatchewan and not private corporations. And I hear how, with the laundry services being privatized, how K-Bro’s CEO earns \$1.2 million per year while the workers are making \$11 an hour. They’re not doing it out of the goodness of their heart — our laundry — and providing dirty laundry back into our hospitals. So we’re paying someone big bucks to run an organization that they don’t even provide their employees a living wage.

So, Mr. Speaker, again I really hope that all the members are paying attention to the possible consequences of the privatizing of our Crowns, the change of the definition of privatization with this bill, and especially a lot of the members who represent rural areas because the citizens in their constituencies are going to be greatly affected by the changes here. We know that a lot of times in smaller communities, the good, mortgage-paying jobs are from these Crown corporations, and they’ve been centralized and centralized. But we wanted to have those good-paying jobs in these communities, and if we start selling them, we’re going to lose that too. So they’re going to lose services that they pay for a reasonable price. They’re going to lose jobs. And again like I said, we’re going to send more money out of the province to Ottawa, you know. And so none of us want that.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I know a lot of my other colleagues have a lot to say with regards to this bill. And at this point, I am going to cease my remarks and I am going to move to adjourn this debate. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The member from Prince Albert Northcote has moved adjourned debate on Bill No. 40, *The Interpretation Amendment Act, 2016*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 43

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Duncan that **Bill No. 43** — *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2016* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to enter into debate on Bill No. 43, *An Act to amend The Pipelines Act, 1998*. And it is a very timely, in fact extremely timely piece of legislation. We just have to think back to last summer in July with the Husky pipeline break along the North Saskatchewan and what that meant to all the people living along that river in The Battlefords, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Melfort, the

First Nations along the river and what that meant, what that meant.

And people clearly thought they had a much better handle on their pipeline. And of course while we're still waiting for the complete and final report from Husky, one that we can all see, the situation it sounds like it was a buckling of one piece of pipeline. But you know, this is the problem that we have, all the unexpected things that can happen. And I know that the minister and we . . . And you know, especially around the riverbank and especially along the North and South Saskatchewan riverbank that we know of the unexpected things that can happen along there.

We often think only rivers flood. But that's not the only thing they do. They also slump, and that can cause just as much or a bigger problem. And you just have to talk to landowners or house . . . people who have beautiful homes along the river, and they think they've got a great place. And I know that's happening in Saskatoon right now: they think that they've built on a very secure piece of land, but the danger of the river is a real, real problem.

And so we had that issue just last summer and the damage that it caused. Apparently there's some 225 000 litres of oil that leaked out. Where it all went is the big question. And that's a serious, serious issue.

But the bigger thing, Mr. Speaker, is when we look back, back to the auditor's reports. And that's where really the puck dropped in this whole thing and even before that, because we should have been paying much closer attention to the pipelines. We knew they were aging. We knew that there would be a problem, and we knew we had to have a solution. And so we're supportive that this is coming forward, that we need to act on this. Of course there will be some questions we have about certain parts of the legislation, and we will raise those over the course of time.

But it is one that we need to send a strong message to the public, to the people of Saskatchewan, and to the corporate sector that this is something that's very, very important, that we need to expect innovation. We need to expect the very best because our economy, a big part of our economy is about energy and transporting it to markets.

We have to do that in the very best way that meets what they call a triple bottom line, a triple bottom line — one about is the financial aspect of it and one is the environmental aspect of it and the other is the social aspect of it as well. We want to create jobs. We want to see jobs here in Saskatchewan. And we know this is an important part of our economy, and we want to make sure that people can make a decent return on their investment. But at the end of the day too, we cannot tolerate a major impact on our environment.

The potential for what had happened was so extreme last summer, and clearly there were people who were doing their very best to minimize that. I have to send out a big recognition to some of the people along the way, particularly the . . . You know. And there are many more. I don't know them all, but a couple, particularly the city managers. The city manager in Prince Albert did an outstanding job, because he had been

through this with another water incident a few years prior to that with the issue in Battlefords. So he had a background in that. But right along . . . You talk about the First Nations. They were right there and they're willing to help — the first responders, the city people — all along the way. And people had to get out right, right away.

I don't want to say Husky is . . . Well we haven't seen the total bill yet. We're waiting for it. And it's important that they do step forward with that, and they've got to just deliver on that. And we're really counting on them to do that. So, Mr. Speaker, there are some questions about this.

But I do want to share, well I know I have the attention of some folks over there where they . . . I don't know if you saw this on the news the other day — and I am being quite serious about this — about transporting bitumen by train. And it was very interesting. The new innovation of developing essentially like hockey pucks, yes, that float, that don't break apart. They're water. They will float to the top. If it's on land, they just fall where they fall and that's it. They get picked up.

So this kind of thinking that I think needs to go, we need to encourage more and more of that. Now that's with the heavy oil, I believe. And so they haven't quite figured out what to do with the lighter oil, but of course we know there are additives that are put to the product all along the way so it moves along. So I just think that we need to keep track of that and keep encouraging innovation. And it's interesting to see trains are saying, we can be safe too.

But we know that in Saskatchewan we have many, many pipes that go under our soil and they need to be looked after. And in fact of course, as I said earlier, this is something that the auditor brought forward back in 2012. I know that we had questions in 2013 about this and there were questions about . . . And it is very interesting when you think about the life of a pipeline and how it's not just building them and getting them up and going and forgetting about them. That in fact you have to start thinking about, you have to make sure that the pipe is built well. And we know we have some good facilities in this province to do that, and I think that Evraz is a good example of that which really made their market claim on delivering good, good pipe. But we also have to make sure that we inspect during construction and we have to monitor along the way. That's so, so critical.

But also we have to think about decommissioning and what happens after the fact. And I think this is very, very important. I think about the situation out at the Great Sand Hills where, you know, they were very clear, the landowners out there and the lessees of the Crown land, about making sure before stuff got on their property that there was a plan. And you know, it was interesting because that drove the innovation. The company said, we can make it happen; we can still make it happen and we'll meet the triple bottom line. And it was a bit of a challenge, but the people out there are sure proud of the fact that they forced the hand and said, we're not going to have sloppy pipelines out here. We're not going to do it in a bad way. We're going to do it in a way that we can all feel really good about, you know.

And so this is something that we want to make sure this

happens. And so there will be questions in the committee when this moves to that point, because this is a very important part, very important of our economy. Pipelines are hugely a significant part, and of course, as the minister talked about the fact that there is some 80,000 flow lines that are now added into this. They're all over, and we need to make sure we keep track of them and what they're doing. And if they're not active, how are they being decommissioned and that type of thing. This is very, very important.

I want to say too that we have some concerns about the fact that . . . The minister, when he made his opening comments, and this is something that he said, and I quote, and this was back on November 29th, 2016: "The proposed amendments will not automatically trigger new spending on pipeline regulations." And he goes on to providing foundation . . . "Any incremental spending on these programs beyond the ministry's ongoing appropriation will [have to] be approved."

But you know, I think this is very interesting. He goes on to say, "Ninety per cent of the ministry's current spending on pipeline regulation programs is offset by the annual well levy." So 90 per cent is funded by the industry themselves.

So this is where you need to say, okay, this is an important issue. What we learned in the summer of 2016 means we are going to make sure we inspect our pipelines. That's a very important issue. That's a very important issue. We're not going to say it's up to, you know, committees who are counting their pennies. This is much more important than that. This is hugely, hugely important, because we are worried.

And this goes back to our whole budget debate that we'll be having. And in fact we had the minister say today that he's going to hear us say every day about how we want to increase spending on this and this and this and this. Like to them, everything should be cut. And I'm wondering, this is why they lost the by-election in Meewasin. People are saying, don't cut education. Don't cut health care. I'm worried, as critic for Labour. And he even pointed me out and said, you know, I bet the critic for Labour will be asking for more. You bet.

With our record in occupational health and safety, we should be doing more, not less. And I hope that isn't the message from the Minister of Finance — all of you folks there should be doing a lot less because you're going to get a lot less. No, we have to make sure this province is safe; people can go to work and make sure they're going to come home at night, that's it's a safe workplace. And that the environment, we won't see the same thing happen to another Husky pipeline crossing the North Saskatchewan River or the South Saskatchewan River. That is just not on.

This is a very, very important message this government is sending if they're not investing one more penny into pipeline inspections. And what is our record, Mr. Speaker, on pipeline inspections? What is our record? Here is what we did. Last year Saskatchewan inspectors did 78 inspections of pipelines. And do you know what they did in Alberta? What did they do in Alberta? They did 2,000 inspections. Two thousand. We did 78; they did 2,000. And the minister, and the Minister of Finance says, don't be counting on any more. Don't be counting on any more. We will have a fancy piece of legislation, so we'll have

talking points to say we did some good things.

[16:30]

And you know, we're actually thinking this is not a bad piece of legislation. We're kind of supporting it. There are some questions we'll have in committee, but we think we need to move on this. But we need to make sure we have the resources to put our money where our mouth is. We've got to say what we mean and mean what we say. And when we say our pipelines in Saskatchewan are safe, they will be safe. They will be safe.

But anybody can see from comparing those two numbers, 78 to 2,000 . . . and is that under an NDP government in Alberta? Would that be the case? Would that be the case? And that same province is facing . . . dealing with the same price of oil. Why is that? How can that be? How can that be? How can that be? Is that a matter of priorities? Is that a matter of priorities? I think it may be a matter of priorities. And our priority in Saskatchewan should be, save pipelines. Save pipelines. We can make money at it. We can make sure there are jobs here. But we've got to make sure the environment's safe, and you've got to send a clear, strong message that's the case. That's the case.

So the Minister of Economy should lean over and talk to the Minister of Finance and say, you know, we've got to make a statement. This is way too much when you have the kind of bill that Husky is paying for their break. And that's right, but it's just got to be a huge hit. It's going to be a huge hit on them. But the people of Prince Albert aren't paying for it. The people of North Battleford aren't paying for it. And the people in the First Nations aren't going to pay for it. It's got to be the company.

But the company's got to know, you do it right the first time and throughout the life of the pipeline, throughout the life of the pipeline. And we all know, we all know, as I said earlier, rivers flood, but they also slump. And that's a well-known fact.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, you know, I don't have much more to add to this, because we think this is a very important piece of legislation that needs to be dealt with. And we'll be asking questions in committee quite forcefully, as we did a few years ago with the auditor's report, making sure all of those things are accounted for, and that this means more than just adding at construction, but also through the lifetime of the pipeline. And by then we should have a strong signal from the minister that he really is going to step up the inspections, because as I said, 78 to 2,000 — that's an unbelievable number.

When an NDP government can be doing 2,000, why can't a Sask Party government do much more, better than that? So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would move the adjournment of Bill No. 43. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Centre has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 43, *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2016*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Government House

Leader.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This Assembly now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:34.]

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