



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

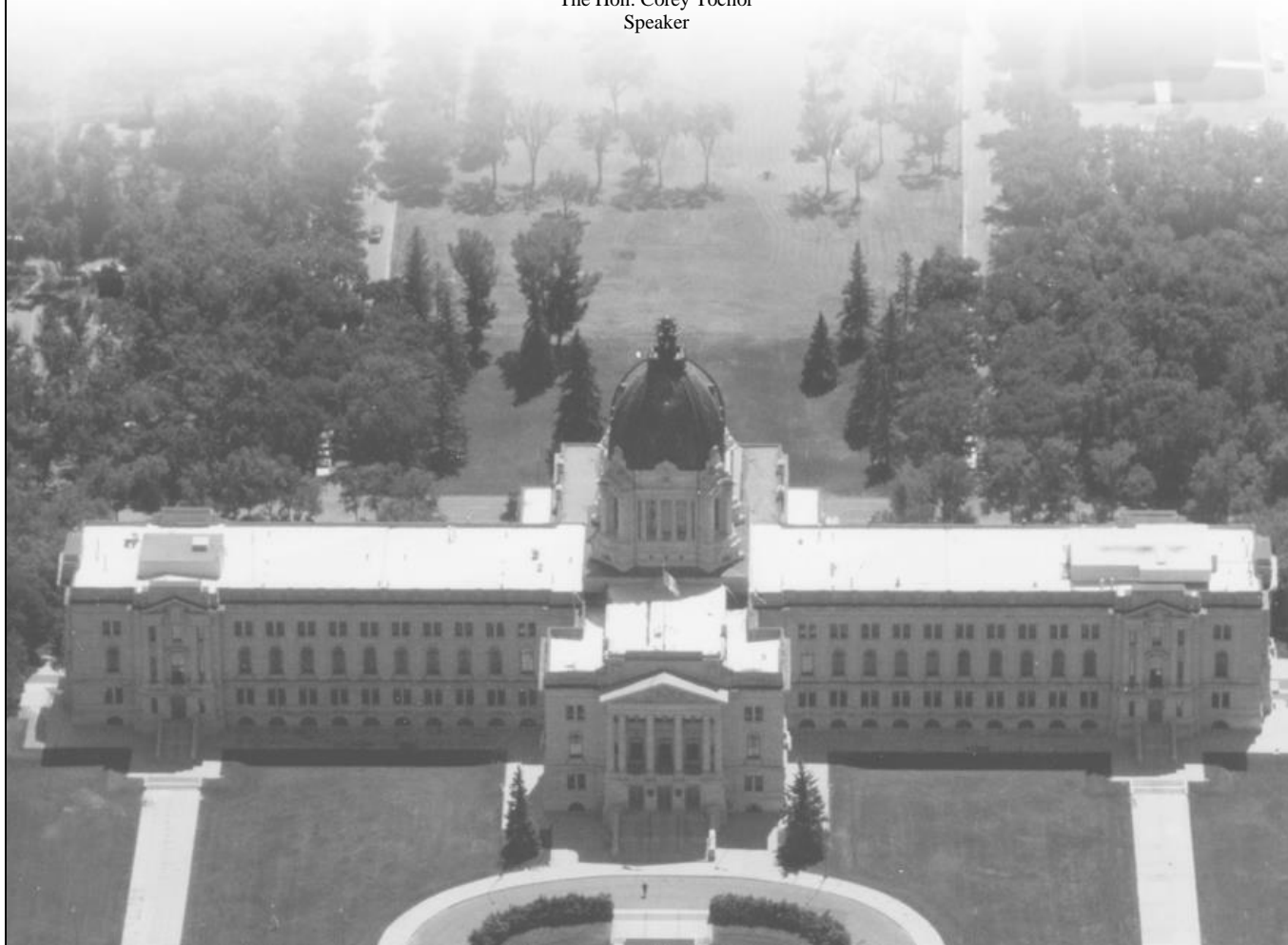
of the

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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Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)

Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

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

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to this Assembly, I would like to introduce in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, a number of students that are here from the Student Medical Society of Saskatchewan. The Minister of Rural and Remote Health and I this morning had an opportunity to meet with two of them. We met with Jacqueline Carverhill and Alison White. They have a number of colleagues with them as well. I understand that two of them . . . I apologize; I don't have the names of all the students here. I know a couple of them met with the Deputy Premier. I think some met with the caucus policy committee. Some also met with members of the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Rural and Remote Health and I had an interesting discussion with Jacqueline and Alison. They're making a compelling case on drug coverage for HIV [human immunodeficiency virus]. We had a tremendous conversation, I think. I've committed to having the ministry look into this and committed to responding back to them. I welcome them here to the Assembly, and I'd ask all members, Mr. Speaker, to please join me in welcoming them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join with the minister opposite on behalf of the opposition to welcome the students here today from the Student Medical Society of Saskatchewan. I know in my time here as an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], I've always appreciated the issues that this group of students brings forward every year, whether it's mental health of students, whether it's seniors' issues, whether it's about how to retain medical student grads or medical grads here in this province, and today this very important issue around the HIV epidemic here in this province and the need for universal coverage for antiretrovirals here in the province.

So thank you for all that you do. I know this is important to you as students and future doctors, and it's important to the people of Saskatchewan. So thank you for your willingness to come to the legislature and share those important issues with us and I look forward to a continued, really great working relationship. And with that, I ask all my colleagues to join me in welcoming these folks to their legislature.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the Assembly, I would like to introduce, seated in your gallery, Mr. Brad Bulbuck of Redvers in my

constituency. Brad and his wife Corinne moved from Ontario four years ago, and Brad works for CNRL [Canadian Natural Resources Limited] in the oil patch in the area and is a town councillor. His wife is the office manager at the Redvers Medical Clinic and is on the health foundation.

Brad also admits to having a wonderful sister-in-law, Sheila Sterling, who works in the Speaker's office, and he wanted to make sure she knew and understood his appreciation of her. So I would ask all members to welcome him to his Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Ms. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce and welcome a friend seated in the west gallery, Mr. Michael Androsoff. Give us a bit of a wave so we know who you are. Michael is a CPA [chartered professional accountant] who has provided EMS [emergency medical services] consulting services for the past 30 years, and his main goal has always been to create fairness and especially towards enhancing EMS services, particularly in the rural areas of Saskatchewan, which are ultimately to the benefit of our citizens. He is visiting us here today in the Chamber, even in this Saskatchewan blizzard, as he is doing business in Regina and in the rural areas of our province. And I say, travel safe out there, Michael. I ask all members to join me in welcoming Michael to the legislature today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce a couple of different groups of folks here today, or I guess one individual seated in the east gallery, and I'm speaking of Trevor Davies, Mr. Speaker. Trevor and I met about a million years ago on the campus of the University of Regina. He was smarter than me then and it's still the case today, Mr. Speaker.

He's put in 23 years as a proud employee with SaskEnergy, ranging around the province. And at one point we were very proud to have Trevor carry the standard for us in the riding of Wood River, as a proud resident of Assiniboia and an active member in that community, and certainly someone who's given a fair amount of his life through community service, through service with the military. But all around great guy, and it's good to see Trevor here in his Legislative Assembly. So I'd ask all members to please welcome Trevor to his Legislative Assembly.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce a group seated in the west gallery. I'm speaking of some folks from the SaskTel telephone pensioners association. We've got Ron Carlson, Brian Renas, Dale Richardson, and Dale Franklin joining us here today. Mr. Speaker, these are individuals that put together a petition drive that gathered more than 4,000 signatures calling on the government to take the appropriate steps to secure the pension of these individuals, Mr. Speaker, that have given so much to the province through their service at SaskTel over many decades, Mr. Speaker.

And they're also calling on the government not just to take the for sale sign off the front of SaskTel, Mr. Speaker. They're also

calling for them to, you know, cut out any sort of backdoor actions that would see them privatize part of that organization as well.

But, Mr. Speaker, if you could join me and all members in welcoming these important individuals to their Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Battleford.

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition from 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:

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 the federal government from imposing a carbon tax on the province.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the citizens of Rosthern, Wakaw, North Battleford, Battleford, Meota, Cochin, Cut Knife, Murray Lake, Blaine Lake, Shellbrook, Marcelin, Richard, Waldheim, Leask, Aberdeen, Krydor, Saskatoon, Hafford, Dalmeny, Spiritwood, Rabbit Lake, Leoville, Bellevue, Glaslyn, Medstead, Hepburn, Livelong, Glenbush, Mayfair, Unity, Canwood, Deer Ridge, Holbein, Prince Albert, Parkside, Pense, Wild Rose, Debden, Hague. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Under the direct order of the member from Prince Albert Northcote, I stand today to present a petition to fight for a second bridge for Prince Albert as we do on this side of the Assembly. Mr. Speaker, the need for a second bridge for Prince Albert has never been clearer than it is today. Prince Albert, communities north of Prince Albert, and businesses that send people and products through Prince Albert require a solution. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition are from all throughout the land. And on this particular page, they are primarily from Prince Albert. I so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition to reverse the cuts to the Lighthouse program. The people that have signed this want to bring to our attention

the following. In April of 2014, the then minister of Social Services said that the Lighthouse in Saskatoon would "... take pressure off of existing detox facilities, hospitals and police cells, while keeping people safe, especially in our brutally cold winters." On the very same day, the then minister of Health said, "We want to ensure that individuals with mental health and addictions issues have a safe place to stay."

And this government has repeatedly indicated that the Lighthouse stabilization unit keeps individuals out of hospital emergency rooms and out of jail cells. In 2015 the Provincial Auditor called upon the Minister of Social Services to provide the correct amount of assistance, not to revoke this essential service and thereby putting the most vulnerable at risk. These ministers are now trying to place responsibility for repairing budget deficits on those experiencing addictions, unemployment, and poverty, and who are living from day to day without proper services. I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan reverse their recent cuts to funding that allows extremely vulnerable people to access the services of the Lighthouse stabilization unit in Saskatoon, and revisit their imposition of a strict and narrow definition of homelessness in November of 2015 which forced the Lighthouse to cut back its hours of essential service in February of 2016; and to take immediate steps to ensure that homeless people in Saskatchewan have emergency shelter, clothing, and food available to them before more lives are lost.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by citizens of Saskatoon. I so submit.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition today regarding pay equity in Saskatchewan. The petitioners want to bring to your attention the following: 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 us all.

And we know that the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that in Saskatoon in 2016 women earned, on 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. According to the most recent StatsCan data, the national gender wage gap for full-time workers is 72 cents for every dollar a man makes.

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

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 the term of this Assembly, and that the Saskatchewan government call upon workplaces within Saskatchewan

within the private sector to eliminate the wage gap between women and men.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition today come from the city of Saskatoon. I do so present. Thank you.

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. Mr. Speaker, the residents of Saskatchewan want to bring this attention to you. 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 Prince Albert police services, Victoria Hospital, and other agencies who may not be trained and/or qualified to provide counselling and intervention services to clients. Mr. Speaker, 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 a petition regarding child care centres in the province. Those who have signed this petition wish to draw our attention to the following: across Saskatchewan, licensed non-profit child care centres are taxed inconsistently. Many of our licensed non-profit centres pay commercial property taxes, and this is something that's not done in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, BC [British Columbia], or New Brunswick.

Child care is essential to the economy, yet most centres struggle to simply balance their budget. This issue threatens both the number of child care spaces as well as the quality of care. Quality child care has an enormous positive impact on a child's future outcomes and yields high rates of economic return.

[13:45]

Child care centres are institutions of early learning and childhood development. It's appropriate that they have the same tax treatment as schools. And I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan recognize that licensed non-profit child care centres provide programs that are foundational to a healthy society by including them in *The Education Act*, and that we exempt all licensed non-profit child care centres in Saskatchewan from property tax through changes to the appropriate legislation.

Mr. Speaker, those signing this petition that I am submitting

today reside in Yorkton. 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 bearing the signatures of some 4,145 petitioners.

It's been brought to the Assembly by beneficiaries of the SaskTel defined benefit pension plan and, Mr. Speaker, they are concerned about the possible results caused by recent actions of the Saskatchewan government, putting the pension plan at risk. They're concerned about the removal of the requirement for SaskTel to fund this plan under the solvency valuation method without assuring the plan would have access to public support for funds, and thereby exposing the plan and putting members at risk. They are requesting that both members of the government and opposition give plan members an assurance that should SaskTel be unable to properly fund this plan or should SaskTel be sold, that the provincial government would provide appropriate funding, if needed, to deliver the benefits to all members of the SaskTel defined benefits plan, as determined in the negotiated plan text. Further, Mr. Speaker, they oppose the privatization of SaskTel in whole or in part.

Mr. Speaker, as I'd pointed out, this petition has been signed by over 4,000 individuals from throughout Saskatchewan, and they are calling on their pension to be protected by the government, which is only what they bargained for these many years on, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present another 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. Although the members on the other side don't seem to understand, I know the members on this side sure understand that Aboriginal court workers play an important role in 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. Mr. Speaker, Aboriginal court workers' work help to address the delays in our court system as well as the overcrowding in our jailhouses, Mr. Speaker, some of the two most expensive problems we have in our justice system today. 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.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing this petition today come from Regina and La Ronge. I do so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Meewasin.

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present a petition to stop the redirection of funding of the Northern Teacher Education Program Council, Inc. NORTEP [northern teacher education program], as it's known, has been a very successful program at retaining local graduates and promoting culturally positive education that helps to preserve local language and local culture, key elements of the commitments of this legislature to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations and to the future health of the people of northern Saskatchewan. I'll read the prayer:

We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Saskatchewan Party government to immediately restore their five-year agreement to fund the Northern Teacher Education Program Council, Inc. and continue to fund NORTEP-NORPAC programs in La Ronge.

Those signing the petition come from the communities of Pinehouse, Air Ronge, and La Ronge. Mr. Speaker, I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Memorial for Glen Day

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on February the 18th of this year, friends and family said goodbye to Glen Day. It was a loss for them as well as the community of Nipawin.

Glen was born in 1945 and grew up on a farm outside of Edam. After finishing high school, he moved to Saskatoon and attended the Saskatoon Teachers' College, receiving his certificate in 1964 and from there began his career in teaching. Glen and his wife, Hughene, were married in 1966. He returned to Saskatoon shortly after and received his Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Science. In 1969 Glen and his young family moved to Nipawin, where he taught at L.P. Miller high school until 1995. In 1980 Glen was elected to the Nipawin Town Council where he was an alderman for 17 years. In 1997 he became mayor for four consecutive terms.

Glen was honoured in 2010 with the Scoop Lewry Award in recognition of outstanding service in municipal government. Glen and Hughene also owned a successful flower and gift shop in Nipawin for 17 years.

Mr. Speaker, Glen's contribution and dedication to the people of Nipawin was extraordinary. I wish to offer my condolences to his family and friends and to all those whose lives he helped throughout his years of service in the community of Nipawin. Nipawin is a loss for having what happened to Glen. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Human Immunodeficiency Virus Challenge

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have an HIV epidemic in this province. The HIV rate in Saskatchewan is more than double the national average — more than double, Mr. Speaker. That should be shameful to all of us.

This disease disproportionately affects indigenous people and people living in poverty. Here in our province we have high rates of mortality associated with HIV. In other parts of Canada, if you had HIV, it would be unlikely that you would get sick or die. That is not the case here.

The rates of this preventable and treatable illness continue to grow. The number of new cases jumped from 114 in 2014 to 158 in 2015. Additionally, Saskatchewan has the unfortunate distinction of still seeing mother-to-child transmission, otherwise most unheard of elsewhere in this country.

I hear time and time again from people working directly in this field that more needs to be done. We have an HIV epidemic in this province, and the Sask Party government needs to acknowledge it and to address it. We need to commit to the United Nations AIDS [acquired immune deficiency syndrome] 90-90-90 target. By 2020, 90 per cent of people living with HIV will know their status; 90 per cent of those diagnosed with HIV will be on sustained antiretroviral therapy; and 90 per cent of those on ARVs [antiretroviral] have their viral loads suppressed. I call upon my colleagues in this House to take immediate action to work to ensure better access to testing and to antiretroviral treatment, and address this urgent issue. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Melfort Citizen Named Volunteer Champion

Mr. Phillips: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege to be able to stand in this Assembly today and to acknowledge a constituent of mine who recently was honoured at a Melfort Mustang game. Don Moskal was this year's Melfort Mustang SaskEnergy Volunteer Champion, an award given out yearly to an individual who demonstrates exceptional volunteerism and community spirit in their support of our local SJHL [Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League] team. The Mustangs had a tough choice when they made this choice because of the fantastic group of volunteers they have. And these people make each and every game a success, especially to watch.

Mr. Speaker, Don was chosen because of his tireless efforts to organize and recruit volunteers to help with the games. He's also known for being the first person to fill in in any of those positions if a person does not show up. Even in receiving the award, Don was quick to acknowledge the many volunteers that make these games possible. Mr. Speaker, Don's volunteerism and hard work for the local organization demonstrates something amazing about this province of Saskatchewan. I invite all members to join with me in congratulating Don Moskal on being this year's Melfort Mustang SaskEnergy Volunteer Champion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Labour Leader Honoured

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize Barb Byers who has been named a Member of the Order of Canada for outstanding contributions for her leadership and advocacy in the Canadian labour movement.

For many years Barb fought for workers' rights as a social worker and then as a member of the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union. Barb became the first female president of SGEU in 1984 where she fought against issues such as poverty, indigenous concerns, gender equity in the workplace, LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning] workers' rights.

She then went on to become the president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, and under her five terms as president she successfully fought against the anti-labour policies of the scandal-ridden Grant Devine government. She was the founder of the SFL [Saskatchewan Federation of Labour] summer youth camp and co-founder of the SFL Prairie School for Union Women.

For the last 12 years Barb served as the secretary-treasurer for the Canadian Labour Congress and has represented Canada as a delegate in the governing body of the UN [United Nations] International Labour Organization. In recognition of her work, Barb was appointed to the United Nations Women Executive Director's Civil Society Advisory Group in December, and just a few weeks ago was selected to receive the 2017 YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] Regina Women of Distinction Lifetime Achievement Award.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Barb Byers on her many recent and well-deserved awards. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood.

Heroes Participate in All Seniors Games

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is an adage that you are only as old as you feel, and I saw that first hand when attending the eighth annual All Seniors Games last month in Saskatoon.

Organized by All Seniors Care, the games are a celebration of camaraderie, competition, and activity that is good for both body and mind. It is also an opportunity to come together as a group and discovering new friends or reconnect with neighbours. The games are open to all adults over the age of 55. From bowling, cribbage, and kaiser to golf and track and field, there was an activity that everyone could participate in.

This year's theme was heroes. There is no doubt that many of the men and women participating in the games are heroes in their own right. The decision to socialize, exercise, and stay positive is key to living a longer, healthier, happier life. It has been said that we don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in

congratulating the athletes in this year's All Seniors Games and wish them all the best in their future in sport. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Professional Association Encourages Recruitment and Retention of Women

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month I had the privilege to attend the council of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan's 30 by 30 initiative. This event was coordinated by Engineers Canada who realize that we need to do better with recruitment and retention of female engineers. APEGS [Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan] has made it its goal to increase the percentage of all licensed engineers to 30 per cent of the workforce by 2030.

Mr. Speaker, this is an admirable goal and something that this government can stand firmly behind. We know average education levels for women continue to rise, and we encourage more and more women to join STEM [science, technology, engineering, and math] careers. Mr. Speaker, engineers are often the backbone of industry, from agriculture and forestry to construction, manufacturing, utilities, resources, and more.

Mr. Speaker, this week was proclaimed Engineering and Geoscience Week in recognition of all the men and women who call themselves professional engineers. Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in recognizing Engineering and Geoscience Week as well as commending APEGS on the work they are doing to bring more women into STEM careers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Preschool and Parent Education Program in Esterhazy

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great honour to stand in the House today and acknowledge a long-running program, and that's the first of its kind in rural Saskatchewan, that is providing support for children and families. The preschool and parent education program in Esterhazy is focused on providing social and educational opportunities for parents and their preschool children. The unique nature of this program allows for both children and their parents to benefit by equipping them with skills and providing the supports they need to succeed in life. The program has seen significant uptake from new Canadians and people who require additional family supports. The focus of the program recognizes parents as a child's first and most important teacher.

Mr. Speaker, the program is supported administratively by the Good Spirit School Division and is hosted in one of the classrooms at Esterhazy High School. The funding for the program comes from the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Community Initiatives Fund, and local businesses who have been quick to support. This is a creative program that has seen positive outcomes for both the families involved and the community.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Laura Petracek, Krista Dutka, and Andrea Bogard, the organizers of the PPEP [preschool and parent education program] program, for making it a success in the Esterhazy area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[14:00]

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Drinking and Driving Legislation and Members' Code of Conduct

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, at the very least it's the function and duty of any government to provide confidence for the people it serves that it stands by the laws it passes. And yesterday we saw a new MLA swear to uphold the MLA code of conduct. Like him, we've all sworn to act "lawfully" and to "protect the public interest and to enhance public confidence and trust."

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier wrote:

Too many of us are still drinking and driving and it is taking the lives of our neighbours and friends, fathers, mothers and our kids. And it is devastating the lives of others who are left behind.

We need to stop this.

I couldn't agree more. We have a serious problem in Saskatchewan with drunk driving.

To the Premier: how does inviting back someone who broke the MLA code of conduct and broke the law by driving under the influence and has not yet finished serving his sentence stop this? What message does this send to kids and communities across Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, a couple of comments to the member's question. Mr. Speaker, I would point out that the member, who was supported in his return to caucus by members of this side of the House, continues to certainly pay a price, both personally and professionally. He was formerly in the cabinet. He was formerly the deputy premier of the province of Saskatchewan, and is no longer serving in those capacities. And I think he would share quite freely that that is a price that he continues to pay. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that the Criminal Code portion of what was required of him has now been served and completed.

I would also share with members that when I spoke with the member that the interim leader of the NDP [New Democratic Party] is referring to, we chatted a little bit about his ongoing desire to be a champion on this issue, to have some very difficult but important conversations with Saskatchewan people, to champion in a proactive way the need for us as a country . . . For the auto-making industry to make a bigger priority out of interlock and likewise similar technologies to prevent anyone

from driving when they ought not to be driving, period, as one of the proactive measures that can be taken by the federal government and by us in terms of calling on the federal government to do those things.

The member should not misunderstand the fact that we do view this as seriously as anybody, as seriously as he. This is why the minister responsible has brought in significant changes, significant changes that I think now present our province as very, very tough on the issue of drinking and driving, but also prescribing some additional proactive measures that we can see to reduce it.

Mr. Speaker, I expect there's another question, and I'd like to get into some of the measures that we've taken, action taken by this government to end this because it is not acceptable on the part of anybody in this province or anybody in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

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

Public Accounts Committee Meeting and Details of Land Transactions

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, this reflects poor judgment of this Premier. I wish the member well. I wish him well as a person. I like the member in discussion here today. But to trivialize the consequences of drunk driving, the consequences are real and they're harsh for Saskatchewan people.

It's not the member, whether or not you're invited back into a caucus that are a consequence. The consequences are for kids, like those kids of Tanner Kaufmann who went to sleep again last night without having their dad at their side. Those are the real consequences and the real losses at play. This speaks to this Premier's judgment once again.

We see this on other fronts as well. We see poor judgment exercised as it relates to the lack of accountability with the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] scandal of this government.

We saw this in committee this morning, once again where in fact the members opposite came in and actually stopped witnesses from testifying, but witnesses that have been there before — not new witnesses, but very important ones that should be there as well — but actually stopping the GTH CEO [chief executive officer] and the deputy minister of Highways from coming before. They've testified before, and in fact the House Leader, who was subbed in at the last meeting to run the show, said that they'd be welcomed back. But again they blocked them again at committee, blocking basic accountability.

You know, if they're going to keep blocking accountability at committee, we can ask the questions here. And this one hasn't been answered by the Premier, time and time again, despite it being asked on the floor of this Assembly. When did that Premier find out that the original owner of the GTH land was the landlord of the former minister of the GTH?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the preamble to the member's question dealt with the issue of drinking and driving in the

province, and I indicated in my previous answer that I wanted to run through some additional changes that are being made. I think all members would agree it's very important that we reiterate these changes on every opportunity, and this is certainly one of them.

Mr. Speaker, so as a result of the changes implemented actually back to 2014, since June 2014 legislative changes, alcohol- and drug-related fatalities are down by 13 per cent or eight fewer lives lost. Obviously, obviously one is too many. The purchase of 47 automatic licence plate readers, the \$1.3 million investment; and the number of changes that were brought in October 2016, including increasing the age of zero tolerance for drugs and alcohol for all drivers at 21 and under, and for all drivers in the graduated driver's licensing or motorcycle GDL programs, regardless of age; added three days of vehicle seizure for experienced drivers for first-time below blood alcohol content offences; and strengthened ignition interlock laws to be the most effective in Canada.

We're continuing to engage in education and advertising and open to additional improvements, Mr. Speaker, in laws that we have and proactive action that we can take as an Assembly and as a people to ensure that this doesn't happen.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the question was about the GTH, which we know wasted millions and millions of dollars on this deal. The question as it relates to drunk driving again reflects poor judgment on that Premier, and we need to do a better job of supporting enforcement in this province.

But when we look at the GTH we don't even know what the full cost will be yet. It's climbing. The former Ministry of Highways director of property standards says, and this is a quote, that it's a "horrendous problem for the Ministry of Highways." In an interview with the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] he said, "Everyone's going to want 103,000-an-acre and it's nowhere near the true value of the land." He also said that there was political pressure on this deal, and he said that the numbers were fabricated by government.

Mr. Speaker — and the Premier can heckle from his seat or he could try answering a question on the floor of this Assembly — the nuns were ripped off by that Premier and that government. Taxpayers were ripped off by that government. Two friends of government received, I believe, about \$11 million in profit. This very simple question is back to the Premier, the one he just failed to answer, the one that he's failed to answer when it's been asked to him time and time again. When did the Premier find out that the owner of the GTH land in question was the landlord to the Minister Responsible for the GTH?

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the question just asked by the Leader of the Opposition, he referred to the Public Accounts Committee meeting of this morning. And I would say that he mischaracterized, mischaracterized what happened at the Public Accounts Committee meeting. What indeed happened is that there were a number of

undertakings made with respect to returning to the committee with certain information. Those undertakings are taken seriously. Ministries are working on providing that information. And of course . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the deputy leader is heckling from his seat. Apparently he's not interested in the facts and the answers, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is that those undertakings will be fulfilled. Those answers will be provided to the committee. And with respect to the allegation from the member opposite on the other matter, just recently, Mr. Speaker — we just announced it in the last number of weeks — land of the GTH was sold for \$256,000 per acre, Mr. Speaker, which is more than the \$103,000 per acre referenced.

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

Intent of Bill No. 40 and Ownership of Crown Corporations

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it's beyond weak and pathetic that the Premier of Saskatchewan can't answer that very simple question for Saskatchewan people, you know, and they just can't be straight. They can't be straight with this GTH deal. They can't be straight with the finances, and they can't be straight about our Crown corporations.

You know, yesterday after a bunch of musing and noise, the Premier said that SaskTel was not for sale, after of course our province rallied and sent him a message. But I didn't hear him say anything about withdrawing Bill 40, a bill that would effectively allow him to sell off up to half of our Crowns. He openly admits that he doesn't have the support to sell off SaskTel and our Crowns, yet he's ramming forward a bill that would allow for a desperate sell-off of our valued Crowns without even having the decency to ask Saskatchewan people. He has no mandate to do this.

To the Premier: will he finally and simply do the right thing and withdraw Bill 40? Our Crowns are not for sale.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's hypothetical. There is no offer to sell any part of any of the Crown corporations, and there won't be an offer, Mr. Speaker, unless we have a consideration in terms of what's the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan and those Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the member from P.A. [Prince Albert] Northcote said that she was concerned that we should be spending more time working on enhancing and strengthening our Crowns. That's exactly what this Act does, Mr. Speaker. This Act is built upon one word, Mr. Speaker, and that word is undefined in this legislation, Mr. Speaker. This Act, Bill 40, simply seeks to define a word that should have been defined in the legislation when they were on this side of the House, when they brought that legislation through, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, SaskTel pensioners who are here with us today would like the Premier to stand by his word. When it comes to selling all or part of SaskTel they want the whole truth, not a half-truth. They do not want this government sneaking in the back door what they now admit they can't get through the front.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 40 lets them sell off 49 per cent of our Crowns without even asking the Saskatchewan people's permission through a referendum or an election. It's shameful, Mr. Speaker. The pensioners here are concerned that the Sask Party is putting their pensions at risk.

Will the government give members of that plan an assurance in writing that they will not sell off any part of SaskTel? And will they protect the retirement benefits that these SaskTel workers have earned by serving our province for decades?

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I have said in the past, at committee as well as in writing to a number of pensioners that have written to me, the plan that is the responsibility of SaskTel and is managed by SaskTel, it is fully funded on an ongoing concern basis, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier did indicate that the Government of Saskatchewan would retain the ownership of SaskTel going on into the future. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the pension for pensioners of SaskTel, employees of SaskTel who are now retired and are pensioners, Mr. Speaker, the pension is secure.

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

Release of Third Quarter Update

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those retirees spent decades building SaskTel, and they are understandably worried about their pensions. And the Sask Party is leaving current workers hanging as well. They're forcing pay cuts and ripping up contracts.

Mr. Speaker, it's the Sask Party that has run more deficit budgets than surpluses. It's the Sask Party who have wasted billions with their mismanagement, scandal, and waste. But it's the people of Saskatchewan they're forcing to pay. Failures like lean, the so-called smart meters, the \$2 billion Regina bypass, the GTH scandal — the list goes on.

Mr. Speaker, the games, the lines, the spin, the yelling, and the laughing from members opposite, those Sask Party responses are just not acceptable. The people of Saskatchewan deserve to know the state of the finances. Other provinces, on summary finance reporting, have released their third quarter updates; in fact that minister did it last year. So why won't the minister come clean now with the Saskatchewan people?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know

how clearer I can be. We're going to release the third quarter update on March 22nd. I've said this last week. I've said it yesterday. I say it again today, Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of members opposite, including the Finance critic. If she hasn't heard me before, I'll be very clear — we're going to release the third quarter update on March 22nd.

Now what we're finding here, Mr. Speaker, as we engage in this debate, as the members opposite are trying to engage in this debate about where the deficit came from in this province, Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say and I hope that members would acknowledge that we've lost \$1.2 billion in resource revenues in this province over the last couple years, Mr. Speaker. We have 150,000 more people living in this province, more people utilizing our education system, our health care system, our social services system. At the same time, we've had a reduction of \$1.2 billion in resource revenues.

[14:15]

Now, Mr. Speaker, recently the Federated Co-op, an organization that member should be familiar with, announced in their results that they're down from \$9.1 billion to 8.4 billion in revenues . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well I think you should pay attention to this. Their CEO, their CEO of the FCL [Federated Co-operatives Ltd.] said, "The company's declining revenue and profit are largely attributable to a \$774 million decline in energy sales," Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what we're seeing here in the province of Saskatchewan. It's happening with the Federated Co-op. It's happening in the potash industry. It's happening in the uranium industry, Mr. Speaker. I don't know why those members can't recognize that.

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

Sale of Crown Land

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, the lines that we keep hearing over and over again are just not believable. They drove themselves and all of Saskatchewan into billion dollar deficit after billion dollar deficit. And they're selling everything that's not nailed down to fill the hole that they dug.

Now we see them selling the ground under our feet. They're hoping to make up for their mistakes by selling off Crown land assets. And we know from previous Sask Party Crown fire sales, they don't exactly get the best return on investment, from the Saskatchewan Capital Network to Information Services Corporation. There is a theme here, Mr. Speaker. They can't be trusted to buy land and they can't be trusted to sell, well, anything. But how does the minister expect the public to trust them to protect our Crown land when they have made a mess of so many other short-sighted Crown fire sales in the past?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for her question. Selling vacant Crown land is not new to the ministry; only the platform we are using this time is different.

For decades the ministry has sold vacant Crown land via a

tender process, both in the spring and the fall of each and every year. We're now using a new platform, online auction, to sell this land. Online farm land auctions are very common, and we wanted to keep up with the way that many, many farmers purchase land these days. And so that's what's changed. We've just updated the platform.

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

Support for Health Care

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, this government's answer to everything is to cut it or to sell it. Earlier this year, the Sask Party released their rushed health care report. No surprise, it calls for even more cuts.

Communities across Saskatchewan are already struggling with grossly inadequate health care services. We've heard concerns about the loss of local voices and what will become of the health care facilities that communities have helped build with their own money. When the minister announced the Sask Party's plans to cut health regions, he couldn't even estimate possible savings. Scrapping health regions will do nothing to undo the damage already caused by the Sask Party's mismanagement, scandal, and waste.

To the Premier: how can he justify further damage to cut deeper into health care when people are already struggling to get the basic care they need?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that question was odd. It was all over the place. The member opposite is talking about cuts to health care. The consolidation of health regions from 12 regions into one region is not about cuts to front-line health care. It's about doing management right and about governance.

Mr. Speaker, currently we have 12 CEOs for the 12 health regions. We have 62 vice-presidents. The members opposite, including that member, for quite some time now have talked about being too top heavy in management in health care, Mr. Speaker. That's what this is going to address. I would assume she'd have been supportive of that.

Mr. Speaker, there's a line . . . A three-person panel did an outstanding job on the recommendations. That's what we're endorsing. There's a quote in there that says something like this: currently, there's 12 health regions that are accountable to the minister but not accountable to each other.

Mr. Speaker, what we're going to do with this is ensure that this system operates as one. Mr. Speaker, there'll be efficiencies and better line health care for that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Rate of HIV Infections

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, this is a government that boasts

about all the money they've spent. It was wasted because they have failed to get the job done. They're achieving less and failing Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, the rates of HIV in Saskatchewan are over double the national average. This is unacceptable. We have talked about this year after year, and things don't get any better.

The Minister of Finance spent most of yesterday justifying why they are cutting from health care, education, and social services. But what he fails to understand is by properly investing, we could actually save money. They just don't get it.

Mr. Speaker, ensuring that all those who have HIV get the medication they need to keep them well will save money and will save lives. When will the Sask Party implement cost-effective measures like universal access to medication that will reduce the rates of HIV?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, this government takes the high rates of HIV in Saskatchewan extremely seriously. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, last fall I had the opportunity to meet with the new member from Saskatoon Meewasin and his colleague, Dr. Skinner. We had what I thought was a very productive conversation on where the province needs to go down the road and that.

As I mentioned in introductions today, we have some incredibly bright young students in the gallery today that made presentations both to myself, the Minister of Rural and Remote Health, the Deputy Premier, a number of other colleagues in the room. They made a very compelling case, Mr. Speaker, not only from a compassionate point of view, which is the most important, but also an economic case on possibly providing universality for HIV drugs.

Mr. Speaker, when we make decisions like that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are heckling over a very serious case. In fact the critic, who constantly is upset if anyone heckles, her and her seatmate continue to do that.

Mr. Speaker, we need to weigh these in terms of productivity versus other drugs. Mr. Speaker, I see I've ran out of time. I hope she does a follow-up question. I'd like to speak further on this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for the Northern Teacher Education Program

Mr. Meili: — So, Mr. Speaker, as we've heard, HIV rates in Saskatchewan are unacceptably high. And I do hope that we'll see universal drug coverage in the upcoming budget. We also know that some communities are hit even harder and that poverty is at the root of the cause of this epidemic. The Sask Party has failed to fulfill the promise to develop a poverty reduction strategy, and now they're threatening to undermine one of the key building blocks to our future health.

Mr. Speaker, last November the Minister of Advanced Education travelled north to discuss the NORTEP-NORPAC [Northern Professional Access College] program. She ignored the advice of indigenous leaders and community members. She ignored the protests happening in the North and here at the legislature.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's not too late now to make a change. It's not too late to listen. Will this minister reverse the Sask Party's plan to take away northern control from NORTEP-NORPAC and continue to provide the five years of funding that was promised?

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

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a decision on NORTEP that we take very seriously. It's a decision obviously that first and foremost is important for NORTEP students. And in some cases, Mr. Speaker, more information has been requested as part of due diligence, which I felt was important and crucial to review. A decision will be forthcoming very soon.

Certainly I appreciate the co-operation of NORTEP council in co-hosting and reviewing submissions by other institutions. And certainly I appreciate the other institutions, Mr. Speaker, and their genuine wish to provide a well-governed, collaborative, sustainable, equitable teaching education program and related programs in the North. That we provide practical, on-the-ground teaching education so that graduates can teach in their own communities in the North or in any community, that is my goal, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, the minister recently described the conversations around cutting funds to NORTEP-NORPAC and forcing the council to find a new partner as an edifying experience. I wonder what the minister found edifying about disregarding First Nations chiefs, community leaders, students, and people of the North while they pled to keep control of their successful program.

This is a program that they have managed, and managed well, Mr. Speaker. NORTEP-NORPAC has been an extremely successful program, giving rewarding careers at home in the North to hundreds of local teachers and, more importantly, giving much-needed positive role models to thousands of youth in the North.

Does this minister not understand that community-controlled programs like NORTEP and NORPAC are vital to the future of the North for education, for jobs, for financial security, for healthy families? Mr. Speaker, why would the minister charged with advancing higher education decide to take us backwards?

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

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First and foremost, the students are of importance here. And I take hope,

Mr. Speaker, in the fact that since we formed government, almost 50 per cent more First Nation and Métis graduates have a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree. That means a great deal, and that we have to build on.

Of course there's still work to be done, Mr. Speaker, but we are beginning to see a difference, an inspiring difference across the province. First Nations and Métis enrolment in post-secondary institutions has increased 34 per cent since '07, Mr. Speaker; 43 per cent at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan]; 34 per cent at the U of R [University of Regina]. And we can all be proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to rule 47(2)(l), the use of offensive language is not permitted in the House. On three separate occasions within question period, I heard the Whip shout from his seat, "lies, lies, lies." I heard the House Leader from the opposition use the phrase "half-truths." And I also heard the critic for Finance, in asking our Finance minister, use the question, "lies," in her questions. And I'm wondering if they could retract those please, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, as to the other individuals in question, I'd invite the Speaker to review the record and to consider what is on offer there. But certainly, for my own words, Mr. Speaker — and the Government House Leader knows this — it's not just the words being used, it's the manner in which they're used that is important in terms of the usage. And as such, Mr. Speaker, I would put that my words were indeed well in order. I'd ask you, Mr. Speaker, to consider these matters and report back to the House with a ruling.

The Speaker: — A point of order was raised today. I will have to review the record because some of the point of order was referring to what was . . . could have been heckled. And we'll see whether it is captured in *Hansard*, other than the question phrased by the member from Saskatoon Nutana, which I will have to, once again, check the record to see what verbiage she used in that account.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Motion withdrawn, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved withdrawal. All those in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. Motion's withdrawn.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

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 Regina Lakeview.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand in my place today and enter into debate on Bill 40. Now Bill 40, *The Interpretation Amendment Act, 2016* on the surface doesn't sound like that big of a deal. It sounds maybe to the casual observer even a bit boring. And it was introduced, of course, with little fanfare and almost as if the government didn't want us to pay attention to this bill or the public to pay attention to this bill. So the Act that is to be amended with this bill is the Act respecting the interpretation of enactments and prescribing rules governing enactments, 1995, or *The Interpretation Act* for short.

[14:30]

And as I've said, to the casual observer that appears a rather long and perhaps boring and dry bit of legislation, Mr. Speaker. It's not the type of bill that would draw public attention. But make no mistake: this is a very important Act, one of the most foundational Acts, and any changes to it should be considered and scrutinized very carefully.

This Act prescribes how all other Acts — Acts passed in the past, current Acts, and future Acts — or regulations, or portions of Acts or regulations, are to be interpreted. Simply put, this Act impacts all other legislation, all other Acts including *The Crown Corporations Public Ownership Act*, but I'll get back to that.

About halfway through *The Interpretation Act*, you come to a heading, "Forms, Words, Definitions." And section 26 refers to the use of forms and words. Now I did find something here that I would suggest that the minister could clean up and modernize, the language under section 26(2): "Words in an enactment signifying male persons include female persons . . ." So ahead of International Women's Day perhaps that is something that could be cleaned up. But of course that's not what the minister chose to focus on here. And I suspect that modernizing language isn't why this bill is before us. No.

There is some other very interesting words in section 26(1) regarding forms. And I'll read it:

When a form is prescribed by or pursuant to an enactment, deviations from it that do not affect the substance and are not calculated to mislead do not invalidate the form used.

I'll repeat that part: ". . . do not affect the substance and are not calculated to mislead . . ." Those are very interesting words, Mr. Speaker. Interesting because this Act fundamentally affects the substance of *The Crown Corporations Public Ownership Act* and it threatens the very spirit of that Act. And make no mistake: this Act that we see before us is entirely calculated to mislead.

It is intended to draw attention away from what is staring us in the face, Mr. Speaker. A very real, calculated, imminent threat to our Crown corporations by a desperate third-term government that is tired, is out of money due to their own mismanagement, and that has had their eyes on privatization of our Crowns for a very, very long time indeed.

So, Mr. Speaker, this bill, the English version is only two pages long, and one whole page is dedicated to cleaning up language about the sovereign, whether the sovereign is a queen or a king.

But the page that I'll focus on has only two main clauses, and I'll focus on the one that really matters here, Mr. Speaker. That is the clause that proposes to simply insert a definition for the term "privatize." And I think while I'm at it here, I'll read that proposed definition. So on the surface, Mr. Speaker, a very small bill that only proposes to insert the following:

"privatize" means, with respect to a Crown corporation, the transfer to the private sector of all or substantially all of the assets of the Crown corporation, the controlling interest of the Crown corporation or the operational control of the Crown corporation through one or more transactions that use one or more of the following methods.

Mr. Speaker, and the methods are listed:

- (a) a public share offering;
- (b) a sale of shares through a negotiated or competitive bid;
- (c) a sale of the assets and business of the Crown corporation as a going concern;
- (d) a management or employee buyout of the Crown corporation;
- (e) a lease or . . . contract; [or]
- (f) any other method prescribed in the regulations [Mr. Speaker].

What we have here is that the premise of this bill is that we suddenly need this definition of privatization, Mr. Speaker. The minister claims that this is what the World Bank uses. Mr. Speaker, I've found no such definition or no such clear definition of the word "privatize" by the World Bank and, more importantly, no other jurisdiction in the Commonwealth has a definition of "privatize" in their interpretation Act. I'll repeat that. No other jurisdiction in the Commonwealth has a definition of "privatize" in their interpretation Act.

Now if the minister were to want to provide any evidence of either a World Bank definition or another jurisdiction that saw

fit to define “privatize” in their interpretation Act, I’d be happy to see it, but from what I understand, neither exists. I did come across this: Mary Shirley, former chief of the public sector management and private sector development division of the World Bank wrote in the *Fordham Law Review*, “There are as many definitions of privatization as there are analysts.”

Now this is coming from the former, someone in a former senior position with the World Bank. So she doesn’t have a clear definition of privatization. In fact, she suggests that there are as many definitions of privatization as there are analysts. “For our purposes, privatization [she goes on to say] is [simply] the transfer of ownership of assets to the private sector.” So that’s her definition of privatization, Mr. Speaker, but this bill proposes another definition.

Many definitions are out there. Not one is agreed upon, yet this government wants us to believe that they now, at this point in time, must move to define the term “privatize.” Mr. Speaker, I don’t know. But what we do know is that the federal government has a definition of what they consider to be a Crown corporation for the purposes of tax exemption, and that is a corporation that is more than 10 per cent privately owned. In other words, if the Sask Party goes ahead with this desperate plan to sell off 49 per cent of any one of our Crowns, the people of Saskatchewan will be sending a whole pile of money to Ottawa.

Now the minister insists that this is just a very innocuous, simple little change. In fact he said, “We seek to define a word that’s in legislation that the New Democrats, when they proposed the legislation on the floor of this House, refused to define.” Well the New Democrats perhaps, Mr. Speaker, along with every other jurisdiction in the Commonwealth. So he went on, “We’re bringing in to the definition of the Act simply the World Bank definition, Mr. Speaker, the most authoritative definition that we could find with regard to the word.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, as I noted, I would be happy to see that definition in its entirety but I haven’t come across that yet.

The minister did go on. He said:

This change to the legislation is not about privatizing any of our Crowns. It’s simply about bringing a definition to . . . Once the definition has been changed, it will allow for all sorts of investments — our Auto Fund . . . our Workers’ Compensation fund, funds that can’t invest in these Crown corporations the way they are.

Mr. Speaker, then unbelievably:

We’ll have Saskatchewan people investing in our Crown corporations to give them the equity they need to continue to grow and continue to provide the vital services to the people of Saskatchewan . . .

Now, Mr. Speaker, I had to read that a few times. Let me see if I’ve got this straight. The minister thinks that we need to privatize almost half of our Crowns to allow the people of Saskatchewan — the people who already own the Crowns — to have equity in them, which they already have because they own them, so that the Crowns can continue to provide the services

that the Crowns, that they already provide to the people that already own them, the very same people who built the Crowns and who have supported them over the decades.

Mr. Speaker, I think that that simply defies belief. This is not simply about defining the word “privatize.” Mr. Speaker, that is absurd. But it’s so much more than absurd when you consider this: this government knows very well, so very well that the people of this province have no appetite for privatization of our Crown corporations. There is a reason, Mr. Speaker, that the Sask Party campaigns on promises not to privatize.

I’m just going to look up some of the Premier’s words here, and I’m quoting from *Planet S* magazine regarding the Premier’s words regarding the privatization of SaskTel:

Based on comments since 2010, Saskatchewan’s premier tends to emphasize two things: keeping his party’s 2007 election campaign promise not to privatize Crowns [which I’ll get back to]; and ensuring that the Saskatchewan electorate has the final say (via referendum) on privatizing SaskTel.

Mr. Speaker, during the election we heard nothing about this bill and we certainly heard nothing about privatization. In fact we heard promises to the contrary, that this government had no intention, no intention at all of privatization. And then just short months after the election we see the introduction of Bill 40, Bill 40, a bill that proposes to fundamentally redefine our Crown corporations and leave them in jeopardy of being almost half-privatized — up to 49 per cent privatized — without the protection of the Crown corporation protection Act, Mr. Speaker.

The reason that they promise and they campaign on promises not to privatize, and it’s the same reason that the Premier backed away from the wholesale privatization of SaskTel yesterday, and it’s this: the people of Saskatchewan value their Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker. There is no appetite, there is no appetite for the sale of the Crown corporations. And there are a number of reasons for that, which I will get to shortly, Mr. Speaker. That is all true, yet at the same time what we also know is that the Sask Party government is no fan of public ownership. In his comments . . . the Premier’s previous comments as well as members of his caucus, are long held and frankly easily searchable in *Hansard*.

Now we all know that the Premier is a student of politics as are members of his caucus, and he learned from a former premier that he worked under, a premier that had an explicit privatization agenda. He learned from him, but he also learned a lot from the former leader of the Sask Party. And this was a hard lesson, I’m sure.

In 2003 the Sask Party lost an election that they expected to win when their leader at the time said that he had no privatization plans but would consider offers from the private sector. Mr. Speaker, that sounds familiar. But it’s not at all what we heard from this government during the election not even a year ago. They learned that lesson. You don’t talk about, you don’t threaten to privatize Crown corporations during an election. And that’s certainly not what we heard from them.

Yet again here we are with Bill 40 in front of us, a bill that provides a threat to our Crown corporations like we haven't seen before, Mr. Speaker, and not that this government hasn't done its own share of stealthy privatization in the province. Those that aren't protected under the Crown corporation protection Act explicitly, there are pages and pages, Mr. Speaker, of whole and in-part privatization.

An Hon. Member: — Read them all.

Ms. Beck: — Oh, you've got someone who wants to read them all. Okay, we've got time. Mr. Speaker, a lot of them under the pretense of Sask first, but this is really a new standard for this government, Mr. Speaker, this attempt to change the definition of privatize so that they pull Crown corporations out of the Crown protection Act, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to refer to that Act right now.

So those corporations that are explicitly named in the Crown corporation protection Act are: well the first one, CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan]; the second was repealed, that was the SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] — and I guess they did campaign on privatization of some liquor stores but not on pulling it completely out of the protection of the Act, but that's another story, Mr. Speaker — Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation; Saskatchewan Government Insurance or SGI; SaskPower; SaskTel; SaskTel Holding Corporation; STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company]; Saskatchewan Water Corporation; SaskEnergy; SGC Holdings; TransGas.

[14:45]

An Hon. Member: — Did you sell the liquor store or give it away?

Ms. Beck: — Well there's questions about whether they sold them and gave them away. I think that there's a pretty good debate for the fact that they were given away, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, those corporations named in this Act are afforded certain protections under the Act, Mr. Speaker, and what is in jeopardy with passage of this bill would be those protections under this Act. And I want to read what some of those protections are. This is important, Mr. Speaker: "No Crown corporation shall be privatized unless that privatization is authorized by an Act enacted after the coming into force of this Act," Mr. Speaker.

So before any of these corporations, Crown corporations, including SaskTel, SGI, STC, SaskPower, before any of them can be privatized the measures outlined in this Act have to be undertaken, Mr. Speaker, and there are a number of them and I'll read them out:

Requirements respecting privatization legislation

Every Bill to authorize the privatization of a Crown corporation must be referred to a Policy Field Committee established by the Legislative Assembly.

And this happens after the bill has been read for the first time and printed and distributed to members and before it's read the

second time. So that means once this legislation is introduced in this Assembly, there would be an opportunity in committee for members of the public to scrutinize, to have a look at the bill, and to have public debate. What is being proposed here would be to pull that right, that very important scrutiny away from our Crown corporations as named in this legislation, Mr. Speaker.

So this sounds like something small and innocuous, but it fundamentally changes perhaps less so *The Interpretation Act*. It fundamentally changes privatization in all legislation, but particularly I think for our purposes here, Mr. Speaker, it fundamentally changes *The Crown Corporations Public Ownership Act* and the protection that our Crowns currently enjoy under that legislation.

So in addition to the policy field committee, before the bill to authorize the privatization of a Crown corporation is considered, there has to be an examination of the terms of the proposed privatization. So that's important, Mr. Speaker, to outline clearly all of the terms under which privatization would be undertaken. That again, if this bill were to pass, that scrutiny would not be afforded, that people would not necessarily have a chance to have a look at all of those terms.

And this is important, Mr. Speaker. What also has to happen is there has to be:

. . . a valuation of the true consideration that the Crown will receive when the privatization is completed, including:

all amounts paid, or assets transferred, to the Crown on or before the effective date of privatization; and

[also] the present value of all future consideration to the Crown calculated as at the closing date for the intended privatization.

And also there has to be a written report prepared on matters set out in this clause.

Mr. Speaker, those are all very important oversights, and they afford some protection to our Crown corporations. But there's one part that I really want to focus on, Mr. Speaker. Now during the last session or earlier on in this session, the Premier noted that shortly after the election they hadn't campaigned on the privatization of SaskTel, but he was floating some trial balloons to see if maybe someone wanted to buy SaskTel. And he fully realized that he wouldn't have the authority to do that, Mr. Speaker, so he proposed a referendum.

It sounded like that was a, you know, very, perhaps open or transparent thing to do. But the reason that he suggested a referendum, Mr. Speaker, is, I would suggest, this clause here: "Notwithstanding any other Act or law, every Act authorizing the privatization of a Crown corporation must contain a provision . . ." So every time the government would want to privatize a Crown corporation, the provision ". . . must not come into force until a date that is at least 90 days after the date fixed for the return to the writ for the next general election . . ." So basically, Mr. Speaker, after a general election or in this case the Premier was proposing a referendum.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of trial balloons up in the air

right now in this province. One of them of course was that referendum around SaskTel. I think we all know here how that trial balloon was received by the people of Saskatchewan. They wanted no part of it. The Premier knows that if they were to hold a referendum on the sale of SaskTel, they would lose, Mr. Speaker. So I think we saw that message loud and clear yesterday.

But I also think we should pay very careful attention to the Premier's words yesterday when talking about SaskTel. He promised that there would be no referendum, Mr. Speaker. If this bill passes, that would also promise that there would need not be any referendum prior to the sale of 49 per cent of SaskTel. So I think that's very important. And nor did he rule out the partial sale, the 49 per cent sale of SaskTel or any other Crown corporation, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's something that we cannot pay enough attention to.

The minister, in second reading of this bill, in his comments mused about other entities, private corporations, or perhaps the Auto Fund, or pension plans having the, in quotes, opportunity to invest in these Crown corporations, corporations that the people of Saskatchewan already own, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that is very significant.

Our Crown corporations have the mandate certainly to provide service to the people of Saskatchewan in a way that is very different from the mandate of a private corporation or very different from the mandate or the fiduciary duty of anyone on the board of governors of a pension plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So that is significant.

If we're anticipating up to 50 per cent or almost 50 per cent sale of any of our Crown corporations, it sets up this dynamic where we have duelling mandates. We have a mandate, the public policy mandate of the Crown corporation — which I'll get into later — that has served us very well in this province, that provides dividends and service, some equitable service to people across the province, at odds with this other mandate, which is to return maximum benefits, maximum financial returns to shareholders or to pension plans, Mr. Speaker. And that sets up a dynamic that fundamentally changes our Crown corporations. And I think that that is something we really, really need to pay attention to, Mr. Speaker, because once these Crown corporations are privatized, we don't get them back.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to, Mr. Deputy Speaker, continue to look at my notes a bit here and see how far off track I've gotten.

As I was noting previously, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has certainly learned from his trial balloon with regard to the referendum and the potential sale of SaskTel, but he also learned from his political mentors of the past. And as I noted, his former leader of the Sask Party found out pretty clearly, way back in 2003, what people think about governments that threaten to privatize Crown corporations, and I think they learned that lesson fairly well.

You see, people in this province are passionate about their Crown corporations, and it's not due to some blind ideological attachments as some on that side would suggest. Mr. Speaker, people are attached to the Crown corporations in this province simply because they work. They have worked for decades, and

they provide very real benefits to the people of Saskatchewan. And I'm going to read a little bit from the web page of the CIC looking at the history of the Crowns: "In the early 1900s, Saskatchewan's population was small in comparison to many other provinces, and widely dispersed geographically." I think we could still say the same today, Mr. Speaker. "Private sector companies either did not offer services, offered them only to major centres, or charged rural customers significantly higher rates than urban customers."

Mr. Speaker, private companies did not want to come in and provide services in an equitable fashion to people across the province. Certainly, you know, you hear tales of the importance of rural electrification, the excitement when that single lightbulb turned on in the farmhouse out at the farm. This was important. And not only was it important to the people in the cities who did have access to electrification, it was important to people out in the country. It was important to their quality of life, to their ability to do business, Mr. Speaker. It was important to kids in schools and in medical facilities in rural areas, Mr. Speaker. And so much . . . I'm struck by this, how much of this still holds true today.

Now it may not be that we're struggling to get electrification to all corners of the province, but think of something like Internet service, something that has become as fundamental to the people of Saskatchewan as power service was back in the mid last century. If we want children across this province to have access to education that is equitable, that provides them opportunities that maybe they won't have in their small rural school, if we want to open up the world to them in a way that frankly should be open to them, there is no reason that schoolchildren in the Southeast or the Southwest or in the North shouldn't have access to all of those programs, all of those ideas, all of that programming that their counterparts in the cities have, Mr. Speaker. But without a telecom, a public telecom company, that would be in jeopardy.

The access to that technology is subsidized by the Crown corporation. Private businesses are not going to have the business case to run lines and fibre optic into the North or into rural and remote areas, Mr. Speaker. People in the cities will be served probably just fine, but not in rural areas if we were to lose something like SaskTel or if the mandate were to be so diluted that there was this tension between profits and the public policy mandate of that Crown corporation or any of the other Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker.

So as I said, people in this province value Crown corporations, not because of ideology — I would suggest there's some ideology at work here on the other side with regard to getting rid of our Crown corporations — but people are attached to our Crown corporations because they work. Saskatchewan's first commercial Crown corporations were established because essential services such as telephone, power, and hail insurance for crops were not available for private companies or were not available to all residents on a fair and equitable basis.

So, Mr. Speaker, one of the underpinnings of our Crown corporations is this sense of equity, this sense that all people who live in this province deserve and should have access to all of these important, important services. And that is something that has been very well served by Crown corporations. And as I

noted, these reasons still hold today.

People value our Crowns because of what they have done and continue to do for our province. And I'm just going to take a minute to look at my notes here, Mr. Speaker, but off the top of my head, I can recall that over the last five years alone, SaskPower has returned almost half a billion dollars to the general revenue fund in this province, Mr. Speaker. By contrast, MTS [Manitoba Telephone System] in Manitoba over the last 10 years has paid income tax once, and that was for the amount of \$1.2 million.

Mr. Speaker, that is a lot of money in difference there that we are talking about, and something that we potentially stand to lose should this amendment Act be passed, but also then the domino effect of loosening protection for the Crown corporation protection Act, Mr. Speaker. I'm trying to go from my memory. If it serves correctly, about three . . . Is it \$3 million per year? Millions of dollars per year, Mr. Speaker, returned to the people of Saskatchewan every year by the way of dividends.

[15:00]

But that's only part of the story, Mr. Speaker. We also have a rich tradition with our Crowns of investment in community events. You see SaskTel out at parades. Our Crown corporations sponsor community initiatives, and that work is really important. I think of the work of the SaskTel Pioneers. Although not directly, certainly people who are committed to that sense of giving back to people in our province. And we hear today that they are concerned about the viability of their pension plan should any of these schemes . . . should this legislation pass or there be any privatization of SaskTel, Mr. Speaker. And that's a legitimate concern, and it is something that would . . . If the government were to propose privatization as it currently stands, that they would have the opportunity in committee and through that oversight to ask those questions and get some answers before the bill was actually passed.

Without that protection, that's gone. And I think, regardless of your views in this province, I think we should hold very tight and firm to that notion of oversight, that notion of when legislation is passed that it should pass, plainly put, Mr. Speaker, the smell test. Or people should be able to ask questions and look at the numbers and be able to evaluate, hold their elected officials to account, let their concerns or their wishes be known. And that's something, Mr. Speaker, I'm very concerned about should this legislation be passed.

As I've said, our Crowns provide the services that we need in this province, and that has been something that's evolved over time. Of course at one time that was rural electrification. Now we see fibre optic capabilities, cellular coverage. Cellular coverage is very important in the province and that's something that SaskTel will put their map of coverage up against anyone else's, Mr. Speaker. But also having that extra carrier in the province has, in article after article, been shown to keep the rates, the cellular rates, low. I know with the recent sale in Manitoba, there was some concerns by the CRTC [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission] about the lack of competition, and I think we would see certainly similar concerns here if we were to see the reduction in the

mandate of SaskTel here.

So you know, Crown corporation after Crown corporation, if you stack them up with similar bundles around the country, they provide good value. They provide good rates for people, good coverage. And that is all something that we shouldn't take for granted, and we shouldn't be so quick to pull out of the protection and the oversight of the Crown corporation protection Act, Mr. Speaker. They keep rates low. They provide good, mortgage-paying jobs, Mr. Speaker, at a time when we've seen so much job loss in the province.

These are jobs that are, you know, not exorbitantly paid, but pay enough to pay a mortgage and keep people in our communities. If we saw the sale in whole or part of SaskTel, who knows how many of those jobs would be lost? And I think that's something that we have to take into consideration. They're rooted in our communities. There's very much a sense of community, of giving back to the community that is formally part of the mandate of Crown corporations but also informally, Mr. Speaker, and I think that that's important.

And then there's this: every man, woman, and child in this province is a shareholder in these Crown corporations and, for some of us, going back generations. We've all had a part in building, in shaping, in supporting these Crown corporations, and it's something that we've all benefited from in this province.

Millions and millions and millions of dollars returned to the GRF [General Revenue Fund] by our Crown corporations. Millions left in our pockets because we're paying good, reasonable rates with good value for the service. And I mean, beyond perhaps ideological blocks, I don't understand frankly why we're in such a hurry to get rid of these Crown corporations that are doing such a good job.

And not only that. These corporations that we know the people of this province value, they don't want to see sold off. We know this because this government refuses in the light of day to campaign on the privatization of these Crown corporations but passes, or tries to pass, sneaky legislation such as this in order to meet those same ends, Mr. Speaker. And I find that, frankly, disingenuous and wrong.

But we know the Premier has learned the lesson well, that the people of Saskatchewan simply don't want our Crowns sold off, and the Sask Party knows it. And that's why they didn't make any mention of this Act during the election, but again that doesn't mean that this government doesn't want to or doesn't have plans on privatization.

Now we know that there are rules in place, as I've noted, that would afford protection to the Crowns under the Crown corporation protection Act but if it's not defined . . . As we've gone through already, this bill proposes to change the definition of privatization so that those protections for . . . I'm getting heckled but I think that it fundamentally does change. It changes the privatization in the Crown protection Act, which proposes one thing, but this would suggest that anything up to that 49 per cent would not enjoy those protections under the Act.

And I think it's really important here to read something that I think is important. That's the preamble to *The Crown Corporations Act*, and this was something that was passed in this legislature in 2004:

WHEREAS Saskatchewan Crown corporations are an investment in the future of Saskatchewan to provide necessary public services, to . . . [ensure] the quality of life of residents and to promote economic development.

Mr. Speaker, I think they've fulfilled that mandate quite well.

AND WHEREAS the public investment in Saskatchewan Crown corporations reflects an historic decision to maintain control of necessary public services within Saskatchewan to assure that those services are operated in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, that means all people of Saskatchewan, not just a select few shareholders, and not in a way that puts another entity at odds with the mandate of our Crown corporations. And I'll read one more clause:

AND WHEREAS in order to respect the reasons for establishing and maintaining Crown corporations and the public interests and rights over their disposition, an Act of the Legislature is required to assure that a decision to privatize a Crown corporation . . .

I'm going to repeat that:

. . . to assure that a decision to privatize a Crown corporation reflects the will and the rights of the people of Saskatchewan;

AND WHEREAS the public ought to be fully informed as to the terms, costs and benefits of any privatization of a Crown corporation;

AND WHEREAS the legislative process is best served by a public debate before a decision to privatize a Crown corporation is carried out.

And it prescribes those measures to be enacted. As I read out before, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that oversight within committee, that full costing, a total cost-benefit analysis, and the opportunity for people of the province of Saskatchewan first of all to understand before an election or referendum what exactly is being proposed, and then to have their say about it, is in jeopardy here. And I think that we cannot pay more attention to that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to go through and look at some of the benefits that we have from these Crown corporations and what potentially is in jeopardy with the potential sale of any of these Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to flip through . . . Sorry, Mr. Speaker, as I flip through my notes here.

Again just to recap some of my previous comments. On the surface this appears to be a very small change to a rather dry Act. I think that we know that this Act, though appearing rather dry and with a very long name, actually is one of the more important pieces of legislation that we have: that it defines the

terms for all other legislation; and that this insertion of the word "privatize" into that Act is something unusual and that is not done in other areas; that there is no one defined definition or one definition for privatization as I would suggest the minister would have us believe; but that this is the thin edge for removing the protection of our Crown corporations from the Crown corporation protection Act.

So I think that it is something that we should pay a lot of attention to, Mr. Speaker. I know that there are a lot of people in this province who are very concerned about this legislation. We've heard from a lot of them. I suspect that we will hear from a lot of them tomorrow on the steps of the legislature. But beyond that as well, I think people are beginning to understand that the fight against Bill 40 is a very important fight. It's one that we have to undertake now.

And certainly members on this side are committed to doing everything that we can and working with our community partners to ensure first of all that people understand what is before us right now with this legislation, what the potential implications are, what the risks are, and to get involved and to contact their MLAs, certainly to talk to their neighbours. I mean regardless of political affiliation in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people do value their Crown corporations for the reasons that I outlined previously.

And there is a reason why this government continuously campaigns as if there is no threat to our Crowns, and then once they get into power, continue with their stealthy plans and actions to privatize. But we haven't seen I don't think, Mr. Speaker, a threat like this quite since 2003 perhaps. And I guess there is a bit of a financial crisis in this province. I would suggest that, you know, oil prices are part of it, but there is a lot of blame to be laid at the feet of mismanagement, scandal, and waste of this government, and that's provided the opportunity, a crisis. And lo and behold, guess what? We've got to come up with some money quick. And there we have those Crowns that we've been eyeing for more than a decade or probably longer just sitting there just making money and providing service to the people of Saskatchewan and returning money to the GRF, just sitting there ripe for the picking, Mr. Speaker. And that's very concerning. And I know I've gone on a bit about this but I don't think we can overstate the risk to our Crown corporations should Bill 40 pass.

[15:15]

And again I know that my colleagues will have a lot to say about this. We have a lot of questions, a lot of concerns. We will continue to watch the ever-changing spin that this government puts on this and then try to see the clear blue sky through all of the trial balloons that are floating around up there, Mr. Speaker. But make no mistake. This Bill 40 does pose a severe and imminent threat to our Crown corporations, and we will continue to push back and educate and to work with all those folks out there who are opposed to seeing this bill passed and the definition of "privatization" fundamentally changed, and in turn putting our Crown corporations at risk. So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move to adjourn debate. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Lakeview

has moved to adjourn 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 Deputy 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 Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Good to join debate, take my place, and say my piece on Bill No. 43, *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2016*. I just want to emphasize that for members opposite. It's pipelines. That's what was said and, you know, hope that doesn't cause any further ricocheting through the points of order or what might come, Mr. Speaker. But certainly pipelines amendment Act, 2016, it's a very important piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and I would submit now more than ever.

This particular piece of legislation comes four years after particularly "... damning auditor's report ..." and that's a quote from the *Leader-Post*, Mr. Speaker. And I guess there's nothing quite like the Sask Party, you know, hurdling into action, getting a 2012 auditor's report that rings the alarm that says the regulatory regime, the oversight regime in terms of this vital aspect of our economy is not up to scratch. Of course the auditor rings the alarm and then four years later, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party of course hurdles into action.

So it's sort of symbolic in a number of ways, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the laissez-faire attitude of this government when it comes to regulations that are not just there, you know, for the sake of regulations, Mr. Speaker, but this is how we safeguard mother nature in terms of this important economic activity.

And this is important economic activity, Mr. Speaker, that I would point out that the Saskatchewan NDP has supported, does support, and will support into the future, Mr. Speaker. But we've always supported that balance that's got to be there in terms of proper regulation, proper oversight, in terms of making certain that the risk is mitigated as best can be.

Because, Mr. Speaker, we had an object lesson this past summer in what happens when you get it wrong, what happens when there are spills which, you know, are too often part of the reality of pipeline activity in this province, and again was related to the 2012 auditor's report, you know, sounding the alarm on the inadequacy of the government's steps that had been taken, and again the fact that, you know, it wasn't enough that she rang the alarm once in 2012. She rang it again in 2014, Mr. Speaker, in terms of trying to wake this government up to get some action.

And you know, fast forward from 2012, 2014 to this past summer and to even, you know, as late as a month ago, Mr.

Speaker, in the past month and the kind of spills that have taken place on this government's watch, it begs the question in terms of, do we have the proper oversight regime in terms of both the mainline of the structure but also within the flow lines? Do we have the proper ... You know, there's a great old line from the band D.O.A., Mr. Speaker, that says, like, "talk minus action equals zero."

And, Mr. Speaker, when this government has come forward ... And you know, in the case of this proposed legislation, it looks like there are some positive steps to be noted in this piece of legislation. But, Mr. Speaker, if you haven't got the action backing up the good legislation, if you haven't got the regulatory muscle to put to the wheel, Mr. Speaker, it's not going to amount to much more than the paper that this legislation is written on.

And in terms of where we're at, you know, you don't need to look any further than what happened this summer, Mr. Speaker, where, you know ... And I guess this is where we'll move from D.O.A. to MIA [missing in action] in terms of where this government was around, you know, 225 000 litres of oil spilled into the North Saskatchewan River, Mr. Speaker, causing untold hardship for communities up and down that watershed, Mr. Speaker, in terms of cities, First Nations, people that rely on that watershed, Mr. Speaker, people that rely on this government to get the job done, people that rely on this government to make sure that, again, the regulatory regime is worth the paper it's written on, that they've got the people in the field doing the work in terms of inspections, Mr. Speaker.

So again it's ... There's some positive steps in this legislation. But the proof, as ever with this government, will be in what happens around actual enforcement, what happens in terms of the talk. Will there be action or will it, you know, equal zero?

So in terms of the regulatory oversight and the work of inspectors again, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's an interesting fact. And my colleague, the member from Saskatoon Centre, did a good job of illustrating again the hard-working inspectors in Saskatchewan conducting 78 inspections of pipelines while in Alberta, 2,000 were concluded in the same period, Mr. Speaker. And you know, I'm not a mathematician certainly, but 2,000 to 78, Mr. Speaker, it's glaring in terms of the way that that jurisdiction has been able to grasp the nettle, to get the job done, to put the shoulder to the wheel versus what we see in Saskatchewan.

And again these are people in the field that are, you know, dedicated public servants. They work very hard, not just for the paycheque, Mr. Speaker, but certainly because of that sense of a calling and in terms of that protective work that is there to be done. And, Mr. Speaker, this government, again when the alarm bells go off ... And again we'd seen that in 2012 with the Provincial Auditor, again in 2014. You know this government doesn't get the message. They hit the snooze bar instead. It's like, you know, back to bed, Mr. Speaker. We'll see if, you know, see what tomorrow brings.

But, Mr. Speaker, that approach to the sector doesn't cut it. It doesn't cut it in terms of the good name of Saskatchewan. It doesn't cut it in terms of the stewardship role that this government has been entrusted with by the people and

communities and by our environment, Mr. Speaker, and by the energy sector itself, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I think the Premier was out there waving the pompoms and boosting the cause of pipelines while this was all going on in our backyard, Mr. Speaker. And if you want to get out there and make the case for pipelines, you've got to be able to have a track record that's more than some kind of bad joke, some kind of, you know, ongoing tragedy for tens of thousands of people along the North Saskatchewan River.

And then in terms of what happened with the response from the government, Mr. Speaker, we were at SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] not too long ago, and certainly the communities were acknowledged — and quite rightly — for the work they'd done in response to that emergency. But, Mr. Speaker, they needed a better partner in that work from the provincial government. Again, Mr. Speaker, was the provincial government to the fore in that circumstance? No, it was more a question of being missing in action and showing up too late.

So on a couple of different fronts, Mr. Speaker, we see the track record of this government being one of hitting the snooze bar when the alarm bells are ringing. And we see them missing in action when an emergency, when an ongoing tragedy is unfolding, in this case in the summer on the North Saskatchewan River, Mr. Speaker.

So again we're interested in this legislation. We think there are some positive measures in here around increased penalties for polluters, Mr. Speaker, around, you know, the steps that need to be taken.

And certainly the member bringing it forward, you know, a highly intelligent individual, knows the sector, knows the difference between hitting the snooze bar and, you know, actually taking an interest, taking an active role in making sure that that regulatory responsibility of government is being upheld. And, Mr. Speaker, we certainly hope that that, you know, the way that they hit the snooze bar in 2012 and again in 2014 and the way they were missing in action this summer, Mr. Speaker, we hope that that has come to an end.

We also hope, Mr. Speaker, that more information is brought to the fore in terms of the actual records around whether or not the proper inspections are being conducted. And we've seen this government play, you know . . . And again I'm dating myself, Mr. Speaker, but back in the 2007 election, I can remember when this government was pledging to be the most open and transparent government in the history of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — And if that's to be the case, Mr. Speaker, and not just some kind of ongoing, decade-long bad joke, Mr. Speaker, then perhaps the members that are "hear, hearing" the proposition over there, maybe they could actually live up to that claim. Maybe they could get the records out into the public domain that attach to these different incidences, that attach certainly to what happened on the North Saskatchewan River this summer.

And in terms of action, that record to date, Mr. Speaker, that's not one covered in glory. And you know, they have a chance to prove me wrong. I'm always . . . I guess the thing about this, Mr. Speaker, is I'm always welcoming an opportunity to be proven wrong, you know. I'm that kind of hopeful, wide-eyed optimist, Mr. Speaker. I'm always open to the Sask Party not living down to my expectations. I'm always hoping that they'll somehow, you know, surprise me.

And I guess that's my hope for the current member that's brought this legislation forward, Mr. Speaker, to get the information out there into the public domain, to get the regulatory oversight there where it needs to be, to make sure that the resources are brought to bear so that those hard-working men and women in the energy and mining branch, Mr. Speaker, can do the job, that they can figure out a better approach in concert with the Ministry of the Environment. Again something that that minister should be well equipped to perform, Mr. Speaker, in terms of making sure that the regulatory regime is effective and efficient, Mr. Speaker. And I guess the thing is, that's not been the record so far, Mr. Speaker. And what they should realize is that the stakes are not just about talking points in the legislature, Mr. Speaker. This is about the livelihoods of men and women in the energy sector. This is about the air we breathe, the water we drink, the land that we live on here, Mr. Speaker, and how that affects all of us and also the wildlife habitat, and again something that the member who has brought this legislation forward should be very well aware of, Mr. Speaker.

So again, I'm a wide-eyed optimist, Mr. Speaker. I live and hope that this government will exceed my expectations, won't live down to my expectations of the way that they've hit the snooze bar in 2012, again in 2014, and were missing in action for, you know, critical parts of what happened this summer, Mr. Speaker.

But I guess this is the great thing about every waking day, Mr. Speaker: you have a chance to be your own best you. And I'd urge that government to, you know, get with the program. Make some action happen. You know, give us a record that we can hold our heads high about, and make sure that it's not impacting our economy, our environment, and the livelihoods of our communities, Mr. Speaker, because right now what they're doing is not serving any of those objectives particularly well.

[15:30]

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, there's certainly more of my colleagues that want to participate in this debate. This one of course, you know, hit the floor of the Assembly back on November 29th, the second-last day of the fall sitting. Again, you know, nothing like that Sask Party government hurtling into action, Mr. Speaker.

But we'll await to see the debate that continues to unfold on this. We'll be interested to see how the . . . Oh well, and I hear the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy hollering from his chair. You know it's interesting that, you know, this is the member . . . And I've got a lot of hope for him, Mr. Speaker. I've got a lot of hope. You know, I might be sort of wasting my optimism but I've got hope for him, Mr. Speaker. The guy's got some skills. And it's not just when it comes to the, you know,

the funny imitations. This is a former minister of the Environment. This is a Minister of Energy and Resources. He should know the sector and he should know the balance that needs to be struck when it comes to serving economy and environment and making these things happen, Mr. Speaker.

So of course, you know, he'll holler from his chair after his government took its sweet time answering to the call of the Provincial Auditor, Mr. Speaker. Again, not once, not just once in 2012, but they called back in 2014 and said, you know, how about you get with it, you know. But on they went and we had to have what took place this summer take place.

And again too many questions that are still there that have gone unanswered, too much information that's not squarely in the public domain where it not only should be, but where this government promised it would be.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I would move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 43, *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2016*.

The Speaker: — The Opposition House Leader 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.

Bill No. 44

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Moe that **Bill No. 44 — *The Water Security Agency Amendment Act, 2016*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to enter the debate on Bill No. 44, *The Water Security Agency Amendment Act*. As the minister pointed out in his second reading speech, water is essential for the future of our province here, Mr. Speaker.

We think about water and we think about the role that it plays in our lives, the many different places good quality water is important. We think about in our home, the water we use for cooking, for drinking, for bathing. We think about farmers, ranchers, and some industry who need water to be able to make their endeavour work. We think about recreation. We think about the opportunity to canoe down a river or water ski or any of those things, swimming in our lakes and rivers, Mr. Speaker. I think about my own experience, Mr. Speaker. I had the opportunity several years ago to canoe the William River into Lake Athabasca and it was one of the best experiences of my life actually, Mr. Speaker. So recreation is definitely something that's important to the people here in Saskatchewan.

We think about all the ways in which good quality water is really important. I think it's important to just mention that many of us take for granted the fact that we can turn on our tap and clean water flows out. There are many people here in

Saskatchewan for whom that is not a reality.

We look to reserves, First Nations reserves here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And just referencing a CBC story in October of 2015, Mr. Speaker:

A CBC analysis has revealed [that] 65 of the province's 70 First Nations have had at least one drinking water advisory since 2004. At almost 93 per cent, the number is well above the Canadian average of 65 per cent . . . Many First Nations have faced multiple advisories, while some, including an area on Cumberland House First Nation have been under a drinking water advisory or order for more than a decade [Mr. Speaker].

So clearly, as the minister said, water is essential for the future of our province and there are many, many roles that water plays in our life.

So this bill, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 44, *The Water Security Agency Amendment Act*, does several things, Mr. Speaker. It streamlines the process for resolving drainage disputes between landowners. I know this is not my area of expertise, Mr. Speaker, but in conversations with the member from Athabasca and as well as our Agriculture and Environment critic, the member from Saskatoon Nutana, they've shared many stories about the conflict between landowners and the difficulty working out some of the resolutions where there is illegal drainage going on, or drainage from one property to the next impacting those downstream, Mr. Speaker.

This bill also gives the Water Security Agency the authority to order the closure or alteration of any drainage works constructed before 1991. It replaces the old two-step process for complaints of illegal drainage by a neighbour with a one-step process that the government says will be resolved in 90 days or less.

It allows appeals of decisions by the Water Security Agency to be heard by the Court of Queen's Bench rather than the Water Appeal Board. It expands the water security authority's ability to enter lands with machinery and carry out work required to enforce an order by the Water Security Agency. When a landowner fails to comply, it expands the Water Security Agency's ability to recover costs for work carried out to enforce an order by the Water Security Agency when the landowner fails to comply. It removes mediation of disputes between landowners from the mandate of the Water Security Agency.

And I think an important piece here, Mr. Speaker, is that it increases the maximum fine under the Act. It increases the maximum fine on summary conviction for offences under any part of *The Water Security Agency Act* from not more than 10,000 and not more than 1,000 for each day or part of a day to not exceeding 1 million for each day or part of a day, Mr. Speaker.

I know from looking back, I think the one thing that stands out for me, Mr. Speaker, about this bill, if you look back at some of the history around this issue, I mentioned my colleagues from Athabasca and Nutana recounting many stories over the years that I've been an MLA here, Mr. Speaker. Over the last several years they've told those landowner stories and some of the

struggles.

I want to draw your attention to 2012 and when the former Environment minister said that, “Saskatchewan plans to crack down on illegal drainage activities, says the minister responsible for the new Water Security Agency.” And so this was back in 2012, Mr. Speaker. He points out that, “Illegal drainage of farmland has always been a concern but has become a huge problem during the last few years of flooding, particularly on the east side of the province.” So this was back in 2012, Mr. Speaker.

So looking at the minister’s second reading comments, he talks about how there were three solid years of consultation. I’m the first person, Mr. Speaker, who believes in fulsome and meaningful consultation, real and meaningful consultation so you connect with stakeholders, people who are impacted by legislation. You listen to them. You take into consideration what they’re telling you about issues, and you develop policy that reflects those concerns, Mr. Speaker.

So where this is back in 2012, it’s 2017 now, Mr. Speaker. So it took the government three years of consultation. Many people have said to my colleagues that they were concerned about the government dragging their feet. So that was in 2015, the government came up with some regulations.

Actually, Mr. Speaker, I want to just take you to the relatively new member from Wood River, when he was the president of SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], said that:

SARM supports organized drainage programs as long as everyone is at the table. The issue has to be tackled soon . . . [he said.]

He also said stronger penalties work only if there are enough people to enforce them. The cost of adding staff to check on drainage could outweigh the penalties.

So this is back in 2012, Mr. Speaker. And I’ll talk about penalties and enforcement in a moment. But it took them three years to move a little bit. So three years of solid consultation and then they did the first step in making changes, Mr. Speaker. It’s taken them two more. So five years, Mr. Speaker, to get to where we are to solve a very complex, admittedly a very complex problem, Mr. Speaker. But I know that it’s a very long time and people have expressed their concerns. People in the agriculture community have expressed their concerns about the length of time.

But I just want to draw some comparisons here. As I said, water is essential for our province of Saskatchewan. But looking at things and looking at consultation process on equal footing here, Mr. Speaker, we can look at health care, Mr. Speaker, that takes up about half the spending of our budget.

This government, under the guise of transformational change . . . and I would argue that transformational change is not administrative change, or administrative change does not equate to transformational change, Mr. Speaker. So this government, back in the fall of last year, the end of summer actually, the end of August, announced a consultation process to look at some

issues around health care, including amalgamation. The minister directed a three-member panel to shrink the size of health regions. He didn’t leave it open. He didn’t direct the panel to do what they needed to do. He said he wanted fewer health regions and he gave them about a month, Mr. Speaker, to undertake this health care consultation. So one month for a budget item that is half of the provincial budget, Mr. Speaker.

We can point to education as well, that basically there’s been less than two months of consultation. Mr. Dan Perrins had about a month to do his work and then a committee was tasked to looking at some of those things, and it was about a three-week process, Mr. Speaker.

So I would argue that fulsome consultation is really important, and I would have liked to have seen that around education and health care. But five years, Mr. Speaker, I think would equate to foot-dragging, Mr. Speaker. We’re glad to have this bill before us and there’ll be lots of debate and discussion about that. But again, I would argue that five years is beyond fulsome consultation and would result . . . One could say that it was all about foot-dragging, Mr. Speaker, on a very important issue that’s critical to people here in Saskatchewan.

The one piece around fines . . . When the minister made reference in his second reading comments, he talked about all of the agricultural pieces. But near the end of his second reading speech, he highlighted the increase in fine. And as I had referenced the member from Wood River’s comments back in 2012 about . . . I just want to read that into the record again that, “He also said stronger penalties work only if there are enough people to enforce them. The cost of adding staff to check on drainage could outweigh the penalties.”

So my concern here, Mr. Speaker, is that the resources will not be there for enforcement. I know thinking . . . I can see around my own critic portfolio in health care, Mr. Speaker, we can look to public health inspectors and the work that they do, and it’s been expressed to me over and over again that there are not enough health inspectors. With their growing portfolio, the growing work that they’ve had to add to their portfolios, Mr. Speaker, they do not have the capacity to do their work in a meaningful way.

So I would say that that’s a big flag for us, those fines. It sounds like the government has listened to stakeholders and has increased those fines to a reasonable level. But I am expressing some concern around the government’s ability to provide the right resources to ensure that that enforcement is in place, Mr. Speaker.

So on the whole, I think the opposition is pleased to see this bill come forward. There’s lots of questions, and over debate here the next little while, we’ll continue to reach out to stakeholders and see how they feel, Mr. Speaker. It’s one thing for the minister to say that he’s spoken to people but, in the past, we’ve had conversations with stakeholders who’ve been referenced by ministers who have not been a fulsome part of that debate.

So we’ll reach out in the next little while, Mr. Speaker, to see what and how everybody is feeling about this bill and have further questions. And I know when this bill eventually gets to committee that our Environment critic will have many

questions for that minister. But with that, for now, I would like to move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Riversdale has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 44, the water security 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 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.

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:44.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Reiter	1561
Chartier	1561
D’Autremont	1561
Young	1561
McCall	1561

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Cox	1562
Belanger	1562
Sproule	1562
Forbes	1562
Rancourt	1563
Beck	1563
McCall	1563
Sarauer	1563
Meili	1564

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Memorial for Glen Day	
Bradshaw	1564
Human Immunodeficiency Virus Challenge	
Chartier	1564
Melfort Citizen Named Volunteer Champion	
Phillips	1564
Labour Leader Honoured	
Forbes	1565
Heroes Participate in All Seniors Games	
Lambert	1565
Professional Association Encourages Recruitment and Retention of Women	
Fiaz	1565
Preschool and Parent Education Program in Esterhazy	
Kaeding	1565

QUESTION PERIOD

Drinking and Driving Legislation and Members’ Code of Conduct	
Wotherspoon	1566
Wall	1566
Public Accounts Committee Meeting and Details of Land Transactions	
Wotherspoon	1566
Wall	1566
Harrison	1567
Intent of Bill No. 40 and Ownership of Crown Corporations	
Wotherspoon	1567
Wyant	1567
McCall	1568
Duncan	1568
Release of Third Quarter Update	
Sproule	1568
Doherty	1568
Sale of Crown Land	
Sproule	1568
Stewart	1568
Support for Health Care	
Chartier	1569
Reiter	1569
Rate of HIV Infections	
Chartier	1569
Reiter	1569
Support for the Northern Teacher Education Program	
Meili	1569
Eyre	1570
POINT OF ORDER	
Merriman	1570
McCall	1570
The Speaker	1570

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Merriman (motion withdrawn) 1570

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 40 — *The Interpretation Amendment Act, 2016/Loi modificative de 2016 sur l'interprétation*
Beck 1571

Bill No. 43 — *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2016*
McCall 1577

Bill No. 44 — *The Water Security Agency Amendment Act, 2016*
Chartier 1579

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