



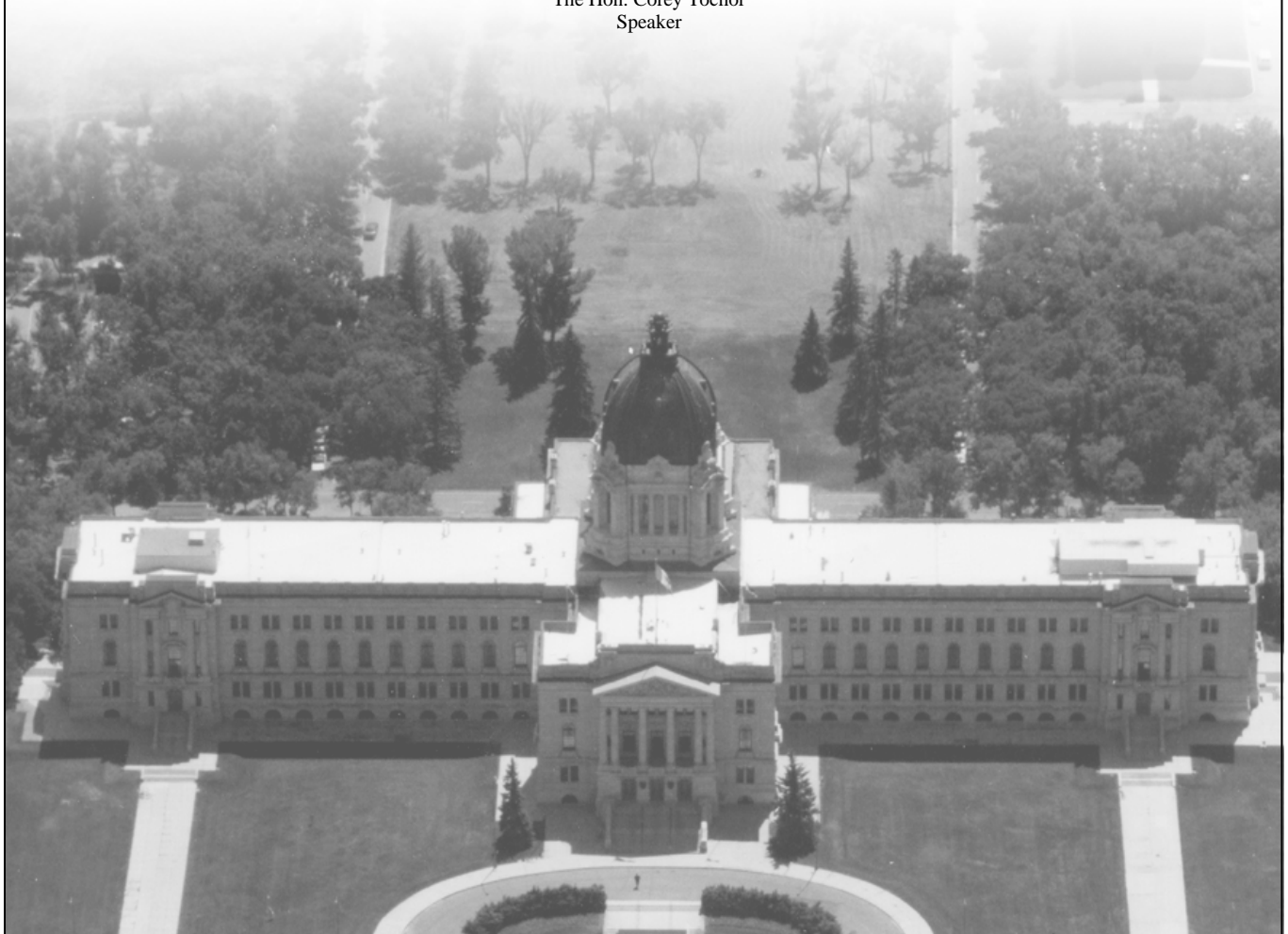
FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)
Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Corey Tochor
Speaker



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

Speaker — Hon. Corey Tochor

Premier — Hon. Brad Wall

Leader of the Opposition — Trent Wotherspoon

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Lambert, Lisa — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)

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Wilson, Hon. Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)

Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)

Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)

Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

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

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of this Assembly, I'd like to introduce a group seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. It's the Women in the Legislature group who are here today and, I believe, tomorrow to both speak with members on this side, and I know they spoke with members on the other side as well.

Myself, along with my colleague from Saskatoon Nutana and my other colleague from Saskatoon Riversdale, had the opportunity to speak with this very inspiring group this morning. And I understand that they also had the opportunity to speak with members opposite. It was a really great conversation that we had, and we're looking forward to having dinner with you folks tomorrow evening as well. So I'd ask that all members join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to welcome the young women from the Women in the Legislature program from the University of Saskatchewan. There are 29 of them here today.

The Minister of Advanced Education and I had the opportunity to sit and speak with them this morning. I have met this group before; there are some members of the executive who are back from previous years. We had a wonderful conversation about, not just women in politics, but politics in general and the need for young people in particular to get involved, Mr. Speaker. These individuals bring a really unique perspective to ensuring that young people and women are involved in our political process.

Mr. Speaker, our government is very committed to promoting women in achieving leadership roles, and it makes me very happy to see these young aspiring leaders with us today. And so I ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join with the members on both sides of the House and welcome guests here today.

And if I may, to you and through you, I'd like to make a special introduction to a very dear friend, someone who has been a colleague, was a colleague of mine in terms of her duties as an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] since 1999, one of the best classes I think of MLAs elected. She's nodding . . .

[inaudible] . . . Mr. Speaker. Doreen Eagles is a former member for Estevan, our former caucus Chair, and a leader in our organization who is dearly missed.

She is in the company of her young wastrel of a significant other, Al Brigden: a gentleman in his own right, a farmer and a businessman from the Southeast, and also a friend to all of us. Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of this Assembly welcome Doreen and Al to their Legislative Assembly today.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am 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, a tax which will have a very negative impact on my constituency and on the province of Saskatchewan.

I could go into a long, rambling debate, but I won't. 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.

These petitions come from Oxbow, Carievale, Gainsborough, Storthoaks, Vanscoy, Regina, and Alida. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition to stop the redirection of funding of the Northern Teacher Education Program Council, Inc. NORTEP-NORPAC [northern teacher education program-Northern Professional Access College] is a program of higher learning and has changed the classroom landscape in the North for over 40 years. A recent report shows that 94 per cent of NORTEP grads found employment in the North. NORTEP has improved teacher retention rates in the North. During the time of truth and reconciliation, the NORTEP program supports its recommendations, maintains culture, language goals.

NORTEP has a positive economic impact in northern Saskatchewan. NORTEP provides high-quality, face-to-face instruction and service to students. The province's financial deficit cannot be fixed by cutting indigenous education in the North. And the prayer reads:

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

It is signed by many good people of northern Saskatchewan. I

so present.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise again today to present a petition to reverse the cuts to the Lighthouse program. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners point out that in April of 2014, the minister of Social Services said that the Lighthouse in Saskatoon would “. . . take pressure off existing detox facilities, hospitals and police cells, while keeping people safe, especially in our brutally cold winters.” The petitioners also point out that on that same day, the minister of Health said, “We want to ensure that individuals with mental health and addictions issues have a safe place to stay.”

Mr. Speaker, they point out this government has repeatedly indicated that the Lighthouse stabilization unit keeps individuals out of hospital emergency rooms and jail cells. On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we couldn't agree more. Unfortunately, as the petitioners point out, these same ministers are now trying to place the responsibility for repairing budget deficits on those experiencing addictions, unemployment, and poverty, and who are living from day to day without proper services, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately reverse their 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 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 petition today is signed by citizens of Saskatoon and Regina. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand in my place to answer the call from the member from Prince Albert Northcote to help represent Prince Albert in their quest and effort to get a second bridge for Prince Albert. So I do so with great honour. Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by many people throughout the province, and it reads as follows:

That they ask the Sask Party government to stop stalling, hiding behind rhetoric, and refusing to listen to the people calling for action and begin immediately to plan and then quickly commence the construction of a second bridge for Prince Albert using federal and provincial dollars.

And as I've indicated, Mr. Speaker, the days that we get up here in the Assembly, which is every day, presenting petitions from all throughout the land and page after page after page of people that are supporting Prince Albert for the second bridge, and on this particular page, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petition are primarily from Saskatoon and also from Hagen. And I so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to present to the House a petition that's opposed to Bill 40 and the potential 49 per cent Crown corporation sell-off. The people who signed the petition want to bring to our attention the following: that the Sask Party's Bill 40 creates a new definition for privatization that allows the government to wind down, dissolve, or sell up to 49 per cent of the shares of a Crown corporation without holding a referendum; that in 2015-16 alone, Saskatchewan Crown corporations returned \$297.2 million in dividends to pay for schools, roads, and hospitals. Those dividends should go to the people of Saskatchewan not private investors.

Our Crown corporations employ thousands of people from Saskatchewan across the province, and that under section 149 of the *Income Tax Act* of Canada, Crown corporations are exempt from a corporate income tax, provided not less than 90 per cent of the shares are held by a government or province.

The Sask Party's proposal will allow up to 49 per cent of a Crown to be sold without being considered privatized, and this short-sighted legislation risks sending millions of Crown dividends to Ottawa rather than the people of Saskatchewan. I would like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately stop the passage of Bill 40, *The Interpretation Amendment Act* and start protecting jobs and our Crown corporations instead of selling them off to pay for Sask Party mismanagement.

Mr. Speaker, the people who have signed this petition are from Saskatoon and Martensville. I so present.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition dealing with pay equity here in Saskatchewan. And the people signing this petition 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; that research published by the World Bank suggests that closing the gender wage gap could be worth the equivalent of 10 per cent of Canada's GDP [gross domestic product].

And we know the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that in Saskatoon in 2016 women earned on average 63 cents for every dollar a man makes, and in Regina women earned on average 73 cents for every dollar 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. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan eliminate

the wage gap between women and men across all sectors where the Government of Saskatchewan has jurisdiction, and that we provide a framework under which this can be done within the term of this Assembly, and that the Saskatchewan government calls 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 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'm pleased to present to you a petition to increase the funding to Prince Albert mobile crisis. Mr. Speaker, residents across the province are concerned about the fact that mobile crisis has had to close its doors during daytime hours, but also the residents in Prince Albert are very concerned about this. When the funding was lost to mobile crisis, the answer to this loss of service was that other agencies in the city would be able to provide that service during the daytime. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, other services are overloaded with work, and this puts an extra burden on them.

And so the people who struggle with the fact that the doors are shut for mobile crisis during the day are the citizens in Prince Albert that require crisis intervention services during the daytime hours. And an example that I heard of was a senior that has early onset of dementia and was lost. And so normally mobile crisis would be able to help assist this person and be able to get them to where they need to be for services. But this took up many hours of other services in the community, which we need them for other things, such as the Prince Albert Police Service. They try to do their best to help with this crisis intervention, but they're not trained, and they're not qualified to provide that. And so I'll read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

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 the Prince Albert mobile crisis unit so that they may once again offer 24-hour emergency crisis service.

So the individuals signing this particular petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the city of Regina. 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. Mr. Speaker, those people signing this petition today wish to draw our attention to the following: to the fact that across Saskatchewan licensed non-profit child care centres are taxed inconsistently; that many of our licensed non-profit child care centres pay commercial property tax, and this is not done in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, BC [British Columbia], or New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker, child care is essential to the economy, yet most centres struggle to balance their budgets, and this issue

threatens both the number of child care spots as well as the quality of care. Quality child care has an enormous positive impact on a child's future outcomes, and it also yields high rates of economic return for everyone in the province, Mr. Speaker.

[13:45]

Child care centres are institutions of early learning and childhood development, and it is appropriate that they have the same tax treatment as schools. I will read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

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 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 today reside in Regina. I do so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition calling for the reversal to cuts with the Aboriginal court worker program. Mr. Speaker, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to your attention the following: that the Government of Saskatchewan cut the budget for the Aboriginal court worker program in the 2016-17 provincial budget. They call out that the Aboriginal court workers play an important role helping Aboriginal people in criminal and child apprehension cases. They point out that Aboriginal peoples are disproportionately represented in Saskatchewan's correctional centres. They point out that Aboriginal court workers successfully help make our communities safer through reduced recidivism rates.

And, Mr. Speaker, these petitioners are well aware that this is a government that has pointed to the Aboriginal court worker program as somehow fulfilling the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission while, at the same time, cutting the budget for the program, Mr. Speaker:

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

Mr. Speaker, this particular set of petitions is signed by citizens from Regina. I so present.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House again today to present a petition to ensure job security for victims of domestic violence. Saskatchewan has the highest rate of domestic violence by intimate partners amongst all Canadian provinces. Citizens of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, are very

concerned at the lack of support for victims of domestic violence.

One in three Canadian workers have experienced domestic violence, and for many the violence follows them to work. Financial stability and a supportive work environment are vital for any victim of domestic abuse. Employers lose \$77.9 million annually due to the direct and indirect impacts of domestic violence.

Manitoba has already enacted legislation, and Ontario is on its way to enacting legislation that ensures job security for victims of domestic violence. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan enact legislation that requires all employers to provide a minimum of five paid workdays and a minimum of 17 weeks unpaid work leave with the assurance of job security upon return for all victims of domestic abuse in Saskatchewan.

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Yom HaShoah Observed in Saskatoon

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday, March 19th, I had the great honour of attending the Saskatoon Jewish community's Yom HaShoah service. Yom HaShoah is an annual day of Holocaust remembrance that takes place on the 27th day of the month of Nisan each year.

This year's Yom HaShoah was a sombre and educational event that was highlighted by the inspirational speech of keynote speaker and Holocaust survivor Bill Glied. Mr. Speaker, Bill Glied was just a young Jewish boy from Subotica, Yugoslavia when he and his family were forced by Nazi soldiers onto a train. He was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau, and eventually Dachau concentration camp where he faced many horrors, including the loss of his entire family.

On April 28th, 1945, Dachau was liberated by American forces and Bill was taken to Canada. Now at 85, Bill is a successful business- and family-man, but he's still haunted by his memories of being robbed of his family and his youth.

Since becoming a grandfather, Bill realized that he had a duty to speak about what he witnessed during the Holocaust. This led him to become a plaintiff at two trials against SS officers who served at Auschwitz-Birkenau, and he returns to Auschwitz each year for the March of the Living where he speaks to young people from around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask all members to join me today in recognition of Yom HaShoah and the important contributions of Holocaust survivors like Bill Glied in helping us remember, lest history repeat itself. Thank you.

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

Remembering Courtney Schaefer

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, every day there are unsung heroes that help make Saskatchewan a better place. I joined with other members from the community of Esterhazy, and family and friends from across the province, to celebrate the life of one of those heroes. Mr. Speaker, Courtney Schaefer was tragically killed while operating his tow truck during the blizzard on March 7th.

In true Saskatchewan fashion, the Esterhazy community and entire province has supported the family, even setting up a trust fund for Courtney's 12-year-old daughter. The family was overwhelmed by the tremendous support.

In addition to the funeral on Saturday, fellow tow truck drivers from across the province came together to honour their fallen driver by driving a procession of tow trucks to the funeral home in Esterhazy. This was an amazing sight, seeing around 75 tow trucks of various sizes participate. In fact Courtney's brother and business partner, Corey, took part in the procession.

The procession was a way to honour Courtney and his legacy but also bring awareness to the risks that tow truck drivers and every other emergency services take every day to help keep Saskatchewan highways and roads safe. Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this Assembly to join me in honouring the life of Courtney Schaefer. Thank you.

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

Social Work Week

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week, March 19th to the 25th, has been declared Social Work Week in Saskatchewan. As a registered social worker, I am proud of the work my colleagues perform every day across the province. I know first-hand the dedication and compassion of Saskatchewan's social workers. They provide essential supports to families, adults, and children as well as important services ranging from crisis intervention, one-on-one counselling, group counselling, marriage and family therapy, addictions counselling, and child protection.

Mr. Speaker, right now many social workers are operating under difficult circumstances due to the callous cuts of this government. Saskatchewan social workers are often overworked and have a heavy caseload. In Prince Albert alone, there are numerous social work positions that remain unfilled because of this government's cuts. But social workers' perseverance because of their desire to help those in need.

Mr. Speaker, this year's theme for Social Work Week is Social Workers — The Power To Empower. This is a very appropriate theme as social workers do indeed empower their clients by providing support and guidance that gives them the confidence to address life challenges and enhance their well-being. Social work is guided by the principles of human rights and respect and social justice and collective responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join with me in expressing our gratitude to social workers across Saskatchewan during this week and commending them of their dedication, compassion, and work ethic. Thank you.

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

Z99 Radiothon for Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

Mr. Makowsky: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The Regina neonatal intensive care unit has been caring for babies for 40 years with approximately 600 babies a year using its services. The anticipation of a newborn baby is very exciting, but when families are faced with the difficulties of an early delivery, they often rely on the help and services of the NICU [neonatal intensive care unit] to care for their newest addition.

Mr. Speaker, the technology used to care for premature infants is constantly evolving. That's why, in Saskatchewan, we're very fortunate to have fundraising events for these small babies to help pay for the best equipment available. One such event took place this past week in Regina. It was once again the 30th annual Z99 Radiothon which raised \$721,192 over its 36 consecutive hours of fundraising.

Hosts CC, Lorie, and Cassity broadcast the entire live event. Families from all across our province shared joyous, yet sometimes heartbreaking testimonials on their experiences in the NICU and how the equipment was critical for their newborns. We also heard from dozens of local businesses and their unique fundraising activities.

In its 30 years, the Radiothon has raised over \$8 million for the Hospitals of Regina Foundation in support of the NICU. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members join me in thanking all those who donated to the Z99 Radiothon for helping to support the technologies and services for the little miracles born in our province every day. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Ituna is Hockeyville Finalist

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Kraft Hockeyville 2017 is in the final stages of finding this year's most committed hockey community. The winning community will receive \$100,000 for local arena upgrades, as well an opportunity to host a pre-season NHL [National Hockey League] game.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that two farming communities are this year's finalists, with O'Leary, Prince Edward Island representing the East; and the great community of Ituna, which happens to be in my constituency, representing the West, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Ituna arena is a vital part of the community. Sean and Tamara Trefiak, who nominated the community said, and I quote, "Here it doesn't matter your age or gender from pre-novice through to recreation league or just a night of shinny, hockey brings our community together." Mr. Speaker, I

don't think a community is more deserving than Ituna. Their current arena is way past its best-before date, Mr. Speaker, and \$100,000 will go a long ways in helping that community build a new arena.

So, Mr. Speaker, I encourage all citizens of Saskatchewan to vote for Ituna. The voting ends at 10 o'clock tonight, and we've all heard that phrase: vote early and vote often. This is one case where you can actually do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

High School Student's Success Story

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to share a success story about a young constituent of mine. His name is Jacob Stynsky, and he is a grade 12 student at John Paul II Collegiate in North Battleford.

Mr. Speaker, Jacob has just signed a letter of intent to play football for Presentation College in Aberdeen, South Dakota. After looking at schools in North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Nebraska, and here in Canada, he decided to attend Presentation College after he visited their campus.

In speaking of the signing, Jacob had this to say, and I quote, "When I was trying to make a decision, I was looking for a place where playing football would be a good fit . . . [for] my studies and my faith."

Mr. Speaker, Jacob is very excited about playing football in the US [United States], and his signing is quite significant since he is the first student from John Paul II Collegiate to play football for an American college. The football program at John Paul II is relatively new, so this talented running back is justifiably proud of being the first from his school to play for an American college.

Mr. Speaker, Jacob is also involved in other sports and will be busy until graduation helping to coach the girls' basketball team at Notre Dame School as well as playing for a senior team at John Paul II and playing badminton and track and field. He is truly a busy young man.

Mr. Speaker, I would like all members of this Assembly to join with me in congratulating Jacob on his accomplishments and wish him great success with his athletics and his studies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Regina Pats Enjoy Record-Breaking Season

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week the Regina Pats hockey team won their 52nd game of the season, which is a record high in the club's history. They finished their regular season this weekend in first place overall in the Western Hockey League. Sam Steel, the WHL's [Western Hockey League] leading scorer, finished with 131 points with his captain, Adam Brooks, not far behind with 130 points.

The team's regular season ended with an eight-game winning streak, bringing the club's 99th regular season to a close. The Regina Pats have done an excellent job honouring the 99 teams before them while bearing the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry badge proudly on their jerseys. Next year during the centennial season, the Pats will also be hosting the Memorial Cup.

Mr. Speaker, though we are looking forward to the tournament next year, all eyes are on the playoff games starting this weekend against Calgary. The first game is Friday. The puck drops at 7 p.m. at the Brandt Centre. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating the Pats in a great regular season. And to some of my colleagues whose teams did not make the playoffs, I'd ask you to join the regiment, get behind the Pats, and cheer them on for their Memorial Cup journey. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Details of Land Transactions and Regina Bypass Project

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, this morning the Premier released a video of himself sitting down in front of a fireplace, and he did his best to pretend that he was having a real heart-to-heart with Saskatchewan people. Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker: a Facebook update, as vague as it is, is never a replacement for a full, honest financial update.

[14:00]

In that pre-recorded video, though, he forgot to mention how sorry he is for his mismanagement of the Regina bypass or the GTH [Global Transportation Hub] scandal. So can the Premier take the opportunity here today to finally tell us a bit about what he knows about that scandal and maybe not dodge that simple question that's been put to him day after day? When did the Premier first learn that the original landowner is the landlord of the former minister of the GTH?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well I think it's important that we correct the record when the interim leader gets the facts wrong for the House, Mr. Speaker, as he has over and over again with respect to the bypass. He keeps pointing to the original forecasted cost for the bypass of 400 million and comparing that to the current cost, which is significantly higher. The reason that it's higher is that the project has changed completely. The scope of the project has changed completely, Mr. Speaker, and moreover the project is now on time and on budget and creating 8,000-plus jobs, providing an important, Mr. Speaker, infrastructure asset — the largest infrastructure project we've seen in the province's history, right in the interim leader's hometown, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to the GTH, once again we have to correct the record, Mr. Speaker. He infers that there's been money lost. Even in the deal that has been debated on the floor of this House and subject to a Provincial Auditor's review, the cost is just over \$100,000. We're just completing a sale of land and

have received payment that would value that land for taxpayers at \$250,000-plus. So even when you add the servicing cost, taxpayers will be making money on that land sale, Mr. Speaker.

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

Government's Fiscal Management

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, still no answer. That Premier on front after front is making a mockery of accountability, Mr. Speaker. You know, it hasn't even been a year since the last general election when he hid the state of the finances. You know, they said they'd balance the budget at that time. They said they wouldn't raise taxes. They said that everything is okay.

Mr. Speaker, since then they've refused to come clean on the GTH. They've refused to come clean on the bypass, and they've refused to come clean on their budget mess. Then this morning in a video not three minutes long, the Premier washed his hands of all blame. Acted as though he and his party haven't been in power for the last decade, Mr. Speaker; as though they didn't blow through the record revenues while not saving a dime and draining the rainy day fund; as though they hadn't promised that this year's budget would be balanced, when everyone knows the Premier knew the facts then and there. Mr. Speaker, how can the Premier turn his back on his actions and on all of his promises?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, at the time of the last election, Mr. Speaker, I think most were forecasting some moderate strengthening in resource prices. Certainly those were the forecasts we were working off of, and so did members opposite when they used a similar forecast to develop their platform.

What we know since then is even non-resource revenue taxation has fallen, I think by about \$400 million, Mr. Speaker. That has weakened and has become more apparent in the months since. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, \$250 million more in crop insurance claims alone because of a snowstorm that happened, Mr. Speaker, principally because of snow in October — well after the election that he refers to, Mr. Speaker. And we know there's still a million acres unharvested out in the field today.

And so, Mr. Speaker, for all of those reasons and because we will now be entering the third year of resource revenues being down by over a billion dollars, it's pretty clear that we need to take some decisions in this province, accountability — as I did take in the video — but also some decisions that will move us off a dependence on resource revenue, Mr. Speaker, and will also shift our taxes, Mr. Speaker, more towards consumption and away from job creation, away from investment, Mr. Speaker. And we'll wait . . . I'm hoping some of that's in the budget on Wednesday. I think some of that . . . [inaudible] . . . will be there. We'll wait for that budget to be tabled.

But as for the promises he closed his question with, the government keeping its promises, the principal promise was to keep the province strong, if you remember in the campaign. In the last job numbers, Saskatchewan is leading the country. It's

leading the country in retail sales, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the price for resources we depend on, the number one job-creating numbers coming out of the province of Saskatchewan last week.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, that Premier has broken promise after promise, offered no accountability. It's totally unacceptable. And now still today, no contrition from that Premier.

It was that Premier and that cabinet that caused the financial mess that we're in. They were the ones responsible for blowing through the rainy day fund and not saving a dime during the best years. And they're the ones here today that won't even take a 20 per cent reduction on their bonus pay as ministers, and they won't work with us to reduce the number of MLAs in this Assembly by five.

Instead they're making Saskatchewan people pay the price. They have consistently left the most in need behind. In the last budget alone they cut supports for seniors, for families, and for the most vulnerable. In black and white, they said that assistance helping victims of domestic violence will have to wait "until fiscal capacity allows."

Mr. Speaker, and as tragedies and as lives have been lost, we've also heard them promise to move ahead with the important implementation of recommendations of the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] and to provide supports in the North to the benefit of all Saskatchewan people. Will the Premier finally make good on those promises or will they have to wait until "fiscal capacity allows"?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, much of what the member has just referenced is representative of current expansions and services since we took office. Some additional requests have been made for further expanding those services, Mr. Speaker, and all of those are weighed as a part of the budget process.

And I'm happy to debate the choices that have been made on this side of the House over the last number of years. I'm happy to point out, Mr. Speaker, for example, that member asked the question, well where did the money go? Well, Mr. Speaker, we took over a situation where there was a nursing shortage, a very significant nursing shortage caused by members opposite. Mr. Speaker, there are now 3,000 more nurses in the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the leader, the interim leader, he doesn't like this. He doesn't like the facts: 3,000 more nurses of every designation now.

Seven hundred and fifty more doctors. When we took over, they weren't training enough at the University of Saskatchewan, point number one. And point number two, they weren't recruiting. Now there are 750 more doctors practicing than when members opposite were sitting on about a \$700 million fund, Mr. Speaker.

There are today 750 more teachers working in schools.

With respect to seniors, Mr. Speaker, for 16 years, they provided zero increase to the seniors' income assistance plan. That helps the lowest most . . . that helps the lowest income, most vulnerable seniors. For 16 years, the socialists would talk about seniors and did absolutely nothing. Mr. Speaker, that particular piece of assistance, that program's been more than doubled.

We can talk as well about programs for the disabled. Four hundred and forty people waiting on a wait-list, people with intellectual disabilities that wanted the dignity of a home. But the socialists didn't have time to act, only time to talk. That wait-list was taken care of, Mr. Speaker, and investments continue across the province.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the question was about loss of life in the North and needed supports for kids and communities all across Saskatchewan. Maybe the Premier couldn't hear the question.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, of course the question was heard. By the way, the question had a preamble that contained a number of facts that are erroneous, and I will take every single opportunity to stand and correct the interim Leader of the Opposition when he makes those mistakes.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Rural and Remote Health, the Minister of Social Services, the Minister of Municipal Affairs have highlighted — in this House and in committee and outside this House — the number of increased investments the government has made. Mr. Speaker, there is no question that frankly more is needed, and it isn't just about resources. It's about engagement with the North, which is exactly what ministers on this side of the House were doing just before the session began. Of course we take this issue seriously. That's why more has been funded in the North . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the leader's still heckling. He wants everybody to take this whole issue seriously, but he continues to heckle from his seat.

I'm telling him today, the record on this side of the House is increased resources in the North because even one more event as we have seen is unacceptable. For him to now question whether or not members on this side of the House take the matter seriously because I happen to be dealing with preamble to his questions, Mr. Speaker — that is ridiculous and it is wrong. Of course we all take it seriously. I know he does. We do on this side of the House, evidenced by investments that we've made, Mr. Speaker, and understanding that more is needed.

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

Budget Legislation

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, last spring the Sask Party scrapped Saskatchewan's balanced budget law. They even made

it retroactive so they could finish off their decade-long mission of draining the rainy day fund to zero. Just in case the Finance minister has forgotten, this was a law brought in by an NDP [New Democratic Party] government that had to clean up the mess after another conservative government, one for which he worked, racked up deficit after deficit. Does that sound familiar, Mr. Speaker?

This was an important law because it held a cabinet accountable for running back-to-back deficits — just two, Mr. Speaker. Well they're well past that. It protected taxpayers and future generations from having to pay for the bad choices of a government plagued by mismanagement, waste, and scandal. So it's a simple question for the Finance minister: when will he bring back a balanced budget Act?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the question from the hon. member. I think in the fall session I was asked about this question, and I said we're working towards developing legislation on a fiscal accountability framework, Mr. Speaker. What we have currently across the country in Canada and every province that has a balanced budget law, they're paper tigers, Mr. Speaker. They've either been suspended by their respective provincial governments or they're not being followed.

Now when the member talked about a balanced budget law under their government, that was when we had the General Revenue Fund, Mr. Speaker, not summary financial statements. It's a different scenario here in the province now. We have over 150 different entities that report in the summary financial statements, Mr. Speaker.

We can have changes in evaluations on mark-to-mark valuation on the price of natural gas on one single day, Mr. Speaker, that can throw your budget out by \$100 million. We can have changes in crop insurance, Mr. Speaker, on one single given day with respect to the changes on the bottom line and summary financial statements, Mr. Speaker.

We are developing, in consultation with the Provincial Auditor's office and academics across the province and across the country, a fiscal accountability framework, Mr. Speaker, that will take all of those different factors into consideration and will be tabled in this House when it is ready.

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

Carbon Capture and Storage Test Facility

Ms. Sproule: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we now have to wonder then, why in the spring, last spring, the Finance minister said he would bring back a balanced budget law in the fall sitting. That's what he said, Mr. Speaker.

The fall came and went and now the leaves are growing back on the trees and still no bill. And yet the deficit continues to grow because of the Sask Party's mismanagement, scandal, and waste — \$2 billion and beyond on the Regina bypass, and of course their \$1.5 billion carbon capture boondoggle. They gave the

public various stories about how well it was working and then refused to be upfront when it came to the true costs.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we hear that their \$70 million CCS [carbon capture and storage] test facility is going to add more debt to the books. Mitsubishi Hitachi is done with their time at the test facility and the Sask Party is nowhere near to pay it off. Saskatchewan ratepayers are on the hook for that \$70 million. Can the Minister for SaskPower tell us how much money this test facility is actually bringing in and what is the plan for the next contract?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of SaskPower.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Let me say this, Mr. Speaker, about BD3 [Boundary dam 3]. Mr. Speaker, BD3 is now the cleanest fossil fuel plant in this country, Mr. Speaker, and that's something we're very proud of.

And in respect to the test facility, Mr. Speaker, SaskPower is currently in negotiations with different entities, Mr. Speaker, to find some participants to continue to use that facility. Mr. Speaker, we have on fairly good authority that we will have further participants in respect of the use of that facility, Mr. Speaker. And there'll be more to report on that when we're ready.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Contract Details for Regina Bypass Project

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. They talk a big game but they just can't seem to close the deal. The Premier bragged in the throne speeches and in this House about SaskPower's CCS consortium and how memberships to the exclusive club would spread Saskatchewan's story around the world, Mr. Speaker.

That was a big deal — three levels of memberships with all kinds of kickbacks. But no one wanted to be part of their fan club, Mr. Speaker. In the whole world, not a single consortium membership was sold. No one wants in on this deal, but Saskatchewan people are still on the hook with a \$1.5 billion tab.

We're also on the hook, Mr. Speaker, for a \$2 billion bypass with profits going to a different kind of exclusive club. The Vinci consortium is making hundreds of millions of dollars off the massively overrun bypass project, and the Sask Party refuses to provide details on the financial overlook and oversight or the jobs associated with the project. Mr. Speaker, will the Sask Party show us the full contract? If not, Mr. Speaker, what is the Sask Party hiding from?

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of SaskPower.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member knows that the contract is online, the value-for-money report is online, and the fairness opinion is online, Mr. Speaker. And I have commented in this House, Mr. Speaker, that those contracts have been redacted for commercially sensitive information. If

they don't like the way that the contracts were redacted, Mr. Speaker, they can speak to the Information and Privacy Commissioner. But before they do that, Mr. Speaker, I'll just read a quote. He said:

... the severed information, if disclosed, could disadvantage SaskBuilds and the Government of Saskatchewan in its future negotiations for highway construction projects . . . [So] I recommend SaskBuilds . . .

Recommend continuing the withholding of that information.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that member, that member was the minister of Highways when they were on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. He knows very well that commercially sensitive information is not released, Mr. Speaker, because it ends up prejudicing the government in its future negotiations. So, Mr. Speaker, we rely on the information and the comments that are provided from the Information and Privacy Commissioner. If he has some exception to that, Mr. Speaker, he can take it up with them. But, Mr. Speaker, these contracts are online for everyone in Saskatchewan to see, and the value-for-money report, Mr. Speaker, so we leave it at that.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, we don't buy any of those excuses one bit. This isn't chump change, Mr. Speaker; it's a \$2 billion contract. They're telling the Saskatchewan people to get ready for tax hikes, but they won't tell us anything about what they spent on dirt or asphalt for a project, a Highways project, that is over a billion dollars over budget. And that doesn't even involve the land costs, Mr. Speaker.

And the people of Saskatchewan have a right to know. I'll say it again: they have a right to know, even more so because of who we are dealing with. This company that we are dealing with has a questionable business history to say the least. Local contractors and workers who feel shut out from this project are asking why the Sask Party would chose to deal with this foreign conglomerate. This is a corporation that has been investigated in Russia, France, and Qatar for alleged fraud and corruption. Mr. Speaker, why is the SaskParty shipping our scarce dollars overseas instead of keeping the profits, the contracts, and the jobs here in Saskatchewan? Why?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of SaskPower.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ninety-five local Saskatchewan companies working on this project; 8,200 local construction jobs, Mr. Speaker. Seventy-one per cent of the work that's being done on the bypass, Mr. Speaker, is being done by Saskatchewan companies — companies who have employees living in their constituencies, Mr. Speaker. Companies like Brandt; Broda Construction, Mr. Speaker; Graham Construction; International Road Dynamics, Mr. Speaker, of Saskatoon; Kullman Engineering.

I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker, and recite all 95 of these names, Mr. Speaker. But these are people that work in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They pay tax in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell the member opposite that I'm sure these

individuals are very happy to have a job in Saskatchewan working on the largest infrastructure project in this province's history.

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

Funding for Education

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, school divisions' emergency reserve funds are meant for emergencies. They're not meant to be used as a piggy bank for the minister to dip into when his government is short on cash.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party drained their own rainy day fund, the one that was left to them by the last government, the one with over \$2 billion in it. And now that it's all gone, they're looking to the rainy day funds meant for our kids' classrooms.

Mr. Speaker, school divisions are relying on these funds more and more due to years of underfunding from this government. If this government takes away the reserve funds, schools will have to cut even deeper. So I'll ask the minister again: will he admit that it was his government's mismanagement that caused this deficit, not our kids and not our teachers? And will he commit to leaving school division reserve funds alone?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We had this discussion last week. Mr. Speaker, school divisions budget conservatively; they often come in under budget. Last year, including capital, they planned to draw \$40 million from reserves, but in fact, Mr. Speaker, they ended up with a surplus of \$10 million. This year, including capital, they budgeted to use \$38 million in reserves — slightly better.

Given the financial situation, we've asked school divisions to limit their spending and find efficiencies wherever possible, something we'll never apologize for, Mr. Speaker. We'll always want to work with our school divisions so they find savings, so they're efficient and they commit to keeping money in the classrooms where it benefits the students of this province. We have confidence in our school divisions to manage their budgets, and we look to work with them to find ways to save costs.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, still no commitment on those reserves. And the Premier has said time and time again that everything is on the table. He's throwing our kids' classrooms on the chopping block too. This government has already forced school divisions to make deep cuts, and some school divisions have even had to dig deep, dip into their reserves just to pay for day-to-day operations.

Mr. Speaker, school division reserves are supposed to be for emergencies. They exist to ensure that our kids' classrooms can be sustained through unexpected costs and enrolment increases that the Sask Party has simply stopped funding.

But now the Sask Party is threatening to take them away. Their own documents show that they are considering taking these reserves from school divisions to plug their massive debt hole. It's inexcusable, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister finally commit to leaving school division reserves alone, or will he take even more money out of our kids' classrooms in a sad attempt to pay for this government's scandal, mismanagement, and waste?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we've asked the school division to be cognizant of the fact that using reserves comes . . . and affects the province's debt and directly affects what deficits are in our province. We now operate under one set of books called summary financial accounting, which is exactly what the NDP asked for and is exactly what we've done.

Mr. Speaker, last week the Education critic, in the preamble to one of her questions, and she said and I quote, "The minister himself has admitted that the government's plan to cut their way out of this massive deficit runs . . . through our kids' classrooms."

Mr. Speaker, I don't ever remember saying anything like that whatsoever. If the member has any such statements, I would ask that she table them today and put them on the record, Mr. Speaker.

I'll tell you what the truth of it is, Mr. Speaker. We want to make sure that we do everything to stay . . . and do everything we can to benefit the students of our province. And we will continue to do that, unlike the members opposite.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Responsible Gambling Unit

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, last week this government presided over the elimination of four of the five dedicated responsible gambling positions at Casinos Regina and Moose Jaw. In response to questions about why that decision was made, Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible stated, "Responsible gaming and recognizing problem gambling, just a part of responsible gaming overall."

Mr. Speaker, could the minister tell us what the heck that means?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Sask Gaming.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First and foremost, these job losses will not impact our commitment to responsible gaming. The corporation remains committed to providing casino entertainment in a socially responsible manner. It offers GameSense program, which is part of . . . Responsible gambling is part of GameSense, Mr. Speaker. It offers a number of tools to help guests make informed decisions. The GameSense advisors were just one of the many ways that the responsible gaming program was delivered.

It's important to note that Casinos Regina and Moose Jaw will continue to have a program manager going back and forth between two, and all of the shift managers, the people that work

within the casinos, are also trained in what the GameSense advisers were trained in, Mr. Speaker. It's just a different way of delivering a program, Mr. Speaker. The program is still being delivered. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, what the minister is saying would suppose that problem gaming is not a problem in Saskatchewan, or that it's being managed by the different agencies that have been responsible for it. In terms of eliminating the four out of the five positions that have been tasked with this work, Mr. Speaker, you'd like to think that that was based on some kind of an analysis of what those individuals were doing.

Can the minister commit today to tabling the analysis that that decision was based upon? And can she also provide some assurance to the people of Saskatchewan that those who have been afflicted with gambling addiction and for which the minister has stated that they feel very much a responsibility into working to address those problems, can she commit to the House that those problems won't get worse?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Sask Gaming.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Again, Mr. Speaker, the loss of jobs in this particular area does not negate our commitment to responsible gaming in the province. This is just a different way of delivering exactly the same thing. Everyone is trained in . . . Mr. Speaker, everyone is trained that is on the floor, that is working the casinos with exactly the same training that was received by GameSense individuals. Mr. Speaker, this is a business decision through Sask Gaming, Mr. Speaker, and we agree with it. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 47 — *An Act to Reduce Salaries of Members of the Legislative Assembly, 2017/Loi de 2017 réduisant les traitements à verser aux membres de l'Assemblée législative*

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 47, *An Act to Reduce Salaries of Members of the Legislative Assembly, 2017* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of the Economy that Bill No. 47, *An Act to Reduce Salaries of Members of the Legislative Assembly, 2017* be now introduced and read the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — With leave, immediately, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Leave is not granted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 43

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

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my duty and honour to rise today to speak and join in on the debate for Bill No. 43, *The Pipelines Amendment Act*. Now I've had the opportunity to read the comments from quite a few of my colleagues, Mr. Speaker. I know quite a few of my colleagues have had the ability to and the opportunity to join in on this debate, and I'm happy to do the same.

Now I know the critic will have quite more eloquent words to say with respect to this bill, Mr. Speaker, as I know she has a much stronger understanding of this area than I do. But I am happy to join in on the discussion and lead or add to this debate as much as I physically can, Mr. Speaker.

Now to summarize, this bill will expand the regulation and licensing of pipelines to include 80,000 existing flow lines. I was surprised to see that we have 80,000 existing flow lines, Mr. Speaker, first of all, in the province. You often travel around and don't realize that there are that many flow lines throughout this great province.

But I was even more surprised to realize that the regulation and licensing of those 80,000 existing flow lines were not covered under legislation, and actually was not occurring, Mr. Speaker, until the introduction of this bill. And then I learned that this is something that's been called on by my colleagues for quite a while, prior to my election of course. But for quite a long time this was a concern that we had on this side of the House, that there were all these flow lines existing and no real proper oversight or regulation for them, Mr. Speaker.

[14:30]

And then I learned that it's also been called on by the auditor in terms of regulating pipelines. And I'm looking right now actually at a 2012 auditor's report, chapter 5, entitled regulating

pipelines. And the auditor, who does very good work, audited the Ministry of Energy and Resources and came to this conclusion:

Our audit concluded that for the year ended October 31, 2011, the Ministry did not have effective processes to ensure full compliance with *The Pipelines Act, 1998* and *The Pipelines Regulations, 2000*. There are requirements under this legislation that are not being acted upon. Failure to regulate pipelines effectively could harm people or the environment.

And then the auditor further went on to say, "The law currently exempts Energy and Resources from regulating the construction of flow lines in the province," which is quite alarming, Mr. Speaker. I can understand why my colleagues were calling for better oversight.

And the auditor, Mr. Speaker, in this chapter goes even further to mention several different recommendations that she felt needed to be implemented. And I know that there's . . . It seems like there's still quite a bit of work left to do with respect to these recommendations. And being a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I know I'll have the opportunity to, or hopefully have the opportunity to speak to or question officials with respect to the status of these recommendations at a later date, hopefully sooner rather than later, Mr. Speaker.

I'm a bit alarmed that this recommendation was made back in a 2012 report and we're just starting to address it now, Mr. Speaker. I'm curious to know what the status is of all of the other recommendations in this report, Mr. Speaker, and so I'm looking forward to the opportunity to ask those questions at Public Accounts Committee. Hopefully I'll have that opportunity in the near future.

It also gives the opportunity to determine how not just recommendations are going but also how policy or legislation is working within government, whether or not resources are being used effectively, Mr. Speaker, or alternatively whether or not there are even a sufficient amount of resources to be able to fulfill the requirements as stated in the legislation.

Now the Bill No. 43 will allow pipelines moving fluids other than hydrocarbons, steam, and carbon dioxide to be considered under the definition of pipelines. I believe that might expand the definition of pipelines. I'm not too sure, and I'm sure the critic would have a better understanding of why these other fluids are left out and whether or not that's consistent with legislation in other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker.

One of the good things about the bill, and like I said, the bill is implementing some of the recommendations that had been made previously by both the auditor and my colleagues on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, but it does give new powers to pipeline inspectors to collect information and enter property where . . . I think, generally speaking, I'm happy to see that the pipeline inspectors are being given new powers. I'm curious to know if they felt like they were being limited in their ability and they were feeling restricted under the current legislation from fulfilling their mandate, Mr. Speaker, and I'm hopeful that these new powers given to pipeline inspectors will provide a further level of power to the inspectors to do their work.

But it's one of the concerns that I have and that we have with respect to this legislation, Mr. Speaker, that it's great, and I've said this before on previous legislation, that it's great to put this forward, to table this legislation, but if there's no actual financial backing for this, if they're not ensuring that the pipeline inspectors are as sufficient in number that they're able to do their job effectively, then there's really no point to this legislation. If this legislation doesn't have any bite and it's simply just bark, Mr. Speaker, then we're no better off when this bill is enacted than we are currently.

The legislation will also grant immunity to government from litigation based on the actions of pipeline inspectors as long as they're carried out in good faith, which makes sense to me, Mr. Speaker. It allows pipeline inspectors to do their work without worrying about some sort of malicious prosecution, but it also provides that comfort to potentially — I'm just ballparking or spitballing who potential litigants would be against the pipeline inspectors — potentially landowners or pipeline owners, Mr. Speaker. It does allow for that ability for if something did not occur in good faith, then those individuals who felt need to have recourse could seek that recourse through the court system, Mr. Speaker.

So it doesn't completely shut the door, but it does allow an avenue for litigation should it be appropriate, Mr. Speaker. I know something being done in good faith is something that has been litigated in the past. I'm not sure if it's been litigated in the past with respect to this particular issue, with respect to pipeline regulation, but I know that there'd be some jurisprudence that could help further along that case. And that's probably the appropriate place for that discussion to happen, Mr. Speaker.

This bill also allows the minister, with the approval of cabinet, to create directives related to areas where he has regulatory authority. It also allows for pipelines previously exempted from regulation and licensing to eventually be covered by the Act at a time set out in the regulation. So that's a bit interesting, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like there's some potential for future expansion of this legislation, and the government wants to provide the ability to expand this legislation through the regulations instead of going through the longer process of moving a bill through the House, Mr. Speaker.

I'm curious to know what sort of pipelines they're thinking about removing from the exemptions, and when. And from what I understand, is that the time of when this will happen will be set out in the regulations. So I'm hopeful that there is enough . . . Or I'm curious to know if there's enough assurance here or understanding here of what the actual process is going to look like and how long that process is going to be. I don't believe the time has actually been set out yet for when this transition is going to occur, but I think it would be helpful to all stakeholders involved in this area to have a good understanding of when that would be. So I'm hopeful that that regulation will be passed by government soon and if only just to provide some further understanding of what this process is going to look like and when it's going to happen.

The bill, Mr. Speaker, also increases the penalties for breaking the law, regulations, or directives from 50,000 to 500,000, which is a fairly substantial increase, Mr. Speaker. I'm curious to know if they felt that the current penalty of \$50,000 wasn't

sufficient. I don't know if the penalty was . . . or whether the legislation was being violated by pipeline owners in the past because they made a business decision and it was more financially feasible for them just to eat the fine, and therefore it was deemed necessary to increase the fine. I'm actually more curious to know whether or not any fines have been imposed at all in the past, or how many times fines have been imposed at all in the past. Like I said, it's great to have fines in legislation but if they're not being enforced, if there's no bite to this bark of a bill, Mr. Speaker, then there's really no point in increasing the fines, Mr. Speaker.

It also allows for prosecutions under *The Pipelines Act* to be, now must be commenced less than three years after the government learns of the infraction. It also sets out new criteria and rules for the transferring of pipeline licences from one person to another, including a clause stating that the transfer must be in the public interest. So that's a bit interesting, Mr. Speaker. It leaves a bit vague what the term "public interest" means. I'm not too sure if the drafters of this bill are intending for that to be litigated. It seems like if that's the term and it's not defined in the legislation that it's going to be potentially litigated in the future.

Or again, if no one complains about it, then there's not ever going to be any litigation. So again, if the ministry in charge of pipeline regulation doesn't have the resources it needs to enforce their own legislation, then there's not going to be any litigation because no one's going to complain about the transfers not being in the public interest, Mr. Speaker.

The bill also adds new regulation-making authority. So the ministry can require operators to put up financial insurance for high-risk projects, and require operators to file emergency response plans. I'm very shocked that this didn't exist in previous legislation. I think we've had some fairly major spills that have happened just within the past year only, Mr. Speaker, that indicate the desperate need for emergency response plans, as well as the financial assurance that's required. Husky had deep pockets, but what if a breach or a spill occurred with a pipeline owner who doesn't have as deep pockets as Husky, Mr. Speaker? So it makes sense to me to have this included, and I'm a bit surprised that it didn't exist before.

Now the bill does not include flow line operators in the expropriation provisions for pipelines. Flow line operators will continue to expropriate land under the outdated surface rights acquisition and compensation Act. So it still leaves a bit of a concern for dealing with landowners and how that affects . . . or how flow line operators and landowners interact, Mr. Speaker. So there's definitely still some gaps and some need for further legislation and discussion there.

So like I said, expanding licensing and regulation to flow lines is a good thing. It's something that my colleagues have been calling on for the government, to the government to implement for quite a long time. But like I said, it doesn't matter what sort of legislation gets passed if there aren't enough financial resources to actually enforce that legislation, if there aren't enough inspectors to do the new inspections that are going to be required with respect to this bill.

And there's definitely quite a . . . We have a very, very long

way to go in Saskatchewan in terms of having an effective pipeline regulation system, Mr. Speaker. Last year, from what I understand, Saskatchewan inspectors only did 78 inspections of pipelines while in Alberta they did more than 2,000.

So like I said again, and I don't think it's trite to need to hammer this point home, especially to members opposite, Mr. Speaker, but if you don't have any financial backing to this legislation, then there's no point of even having the legislation. You can increase the fines and the penalties. You can increase the powers of the inspectors. But if you don't have enough inspectors, then what's the point, Mr. Speaker?

And that's the frustrating thing with this government who seems to try to find every little way they can slice and dice. I would not be shocked if this was up on the chopping block in the future. There's been a lot of other things that have been up on the chopping block with this government. I know this government does not see environmental regulation or environmental protection as a priority. So we'll be watching this area of funding, Mr. Speaker, closely to see whether or not the government is going to put their money where their mouth is, especially in light of the summer that we had with the oil spill in the North Saskatchewan and the impact that had on thousands, Mr. Speaker, thousands of residents.

So it would be quite a disappointment to say the least, and that would be quite an understatement, if the government does not put any financial resources in this area and to not provide the inappropriate amount of funding for pipeline inspectors. And I think the government often feels, the Sask Party often feels that if they cut enough small things — things they deem as small that have actually very large impacts on a lot of people in this province, Mr. Speaker — that no one will really speak up and no one will really notice.

[14:45]

But we'll be watching this one carefully, Mr. Speaker, both through the revenues on budget day and as well through the audited reports we've received at Public Accounts and our ability to question officials at those meetings, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan will hopefully not have to relive the summer that we had this past summer. And that hopefully the Sask Party have actually learned some lessons during that spell and will put funding in place to ensure that our pipelines are regulated appropriately so that this is a situation that doesn't happen again.

This is, as I said, something that's been called on for a while. And I'm looking actually . . . Now here's something that I found alarming actually. I'm going to talk about this a little bit first before I move on to this article. I was reviewing the comments that the minister made when he did his second reading speech, with respect of this bill. That's why I think it's important for me to say time and time again the importance of an appropriately funded regulatory system. He said specifically:

The proposed amendments will not automatically trigger new spending on pipeline regulations. They will however provide the foundation for building new programs and data systems to strengthen our regulatory oversight of the industry. Any incremental spending on these programs

beyond the ministry's ongoing appropriation will be approved through the normal budgeting process. Ninety per cent of the ministry's current spending on pipeline regulation programs is offset by the annual well levy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, he makes it very clear that there isn't any automatic plans to fund these heightened regulations. So as I said we're going to be watching this very closely to make sure that this legislation is not just a paper lion, which I think one of the members used in question period this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It can be, that turn of phrase can be used quite often for a lot of the things that the Sask Party has done, Mr. Speaker.

I know that I have quite a few colleagues here who are going to be interested to join in on this debate. So with that I would like to adjourn debate on Bill No. 43, *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2016*, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Douglas Park 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 Prince Albert Northcote.

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today to talk about Bill No. 44, *The Water Security Agency Amendment Act* and share some of my thoughts with regards to changes to this Act. Well we know, Mr. Speaker, that we have been calling for a comprehensive drainage strategy to help resolve drainage issues, so we welcome changes. But there are many concerns that were brought to my attention with regards to changes to this bill, and I plan on discussing this.

On my drive down to Regina this lovely weekend on Sunday, I took the Highway No. 2 from Prince Albert to Regina. It's a beautiful drive there and you see a lot of the farms, and it's kind of my old stomping grounds when I was younger. And there was a lot of flooding already; you could see, like some of the streets were flooded. They were having a hard time going across that.

So we know that having a proper drainage system is important because we've been getting more than anticipated rain, and that's caused some issues in a lot of different areas of our province. And so this is a really important issue to discuss, and it's really impacted a lot of farms and a lot of communities as well, you know. And so I think this is a really important discussion that we need to have.

But, Mr. Speaker, I was recently at the SARM [Saskatchewan

Association of Rural Municipalities] convention, and a lot of the municipal leaders there, they talked about how important it is to have this type of legislation as well. And they do realize that it's time to make some changes, but they talked about some of the concerns that they've had with regards to this bill. And they did indicate that they've talked to the ministers in charge — both the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Agriculture — because they wanted to make sure that their voice was heard. And they at times said that they had these conversations with the ministers, but they don't really necessarily feel that they were listened to. And they're concerned about the language with regards to the changes in this bill and many other things.

And so with regards to this bill, the Water Appeal Board is going to be removed. So this gives the Water Security Agency unlimited power, and they make the decisions. And that was an area that people were quite concerned about: if a certain agency or a certain ministry will have the ultimate power, and they don't have any form of being able to repeal some of those decisions that they may feel that were made . . . that were the right decisions to be made. And they deserve to have an outlet to have that say as well.

Also the terminology in this bill, I was told, can really impact agriculture by the millions of dollars per year. And I believe — when I was listening to someone who went up to talk about a resolution that they put forward that I'll discuss in a little bit here — that was one of their concerns, was that this bill would impact agriculture and by millions of dollars per year. That's a great amount, Mr. Speaker. And we know that a lot of times farmers can be struggling to make ends meet, and that could really impact possibly, especially the smaller farm owners that may only have a certain amount of land that they rely on.

And again, like I said, the wording in this bill is troubling. And they feel that it would have an . . . like it has effects on the land ownership rights. And so of course when you own land and you worry that the government may be able to at any time take over that, that's really troubling, you know. And that's your livelihood, and you need to have that reassurance that that won't be . . . that would be a last-case scenario, you know.

And so also another concern that was brought up when it was time to talk about resolutions was that adequate outlets for drainage should be the focus. They were hoping that that could be more of a focus with regards to this bill than they felt that the language already provided. So I think that's important that we recognize that and ensure that outlets for drainage is discussed in this bill.

Like I said, it's time to make some changes with regards to this, but do we need to be so hasty and rush through this? I think it's important to take what a lot of people's concerns are, the stakeholders, and maybe incorporate some of those concerns into the changes to this. We don't need to rush through. There's no need for that at this point because the farmers are in favour for proper drainage. They just don't want their rights to be infringed with regards to it.

So we want to ensure that farmers feel that they have their rights and they have a way to appeal decisions. And they feel that this bill will put a lot of power in the ministers' hands. And

although a lot of people there had good faith in the current ministers that we have here, but they said, you know, who knows who the ministers could be in the future; and if they had that level of power, what decisions could be made? And that was a good point. I thought that was a very valid point that they addressed there.

And again, communication is a two-way street. If there needs to be more consultation done and . . . From a lot of the people that I talked to at this convention and from a lot of the media that I've been reading with regards to concerns with this bill, it sounds like there is a need for more consultation. And I hope the minister considers that. This bill could be delayed until a workable platform is in place. So I hope he considers that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I did want to talk about the resolutions that were in fact passed in the SARM convention with regards to this bill because, like I said, this was discussed in length and the ministers did hear from the people there as well. So this is no surprise to them about the issues that were brought up. So the first resolution, I'll read that:

WHEREAS Bill 44 to amend The Water Security Agency Act was introduced and given first reading to the Legislative Assembly in November, 2016, with plans for obtaining third reading and royal assent in the spring of 2017; and

WHEREAS Bill 44 was not referred to a committee with the option to conduct public hearings on its subject matter; and

WHEREAS Bill 44 is designed to help the Water Security Agency bring all drainage into compliance over the next 10 years; and

WHEREAS Bill 44 will grant the Water Security Agency significantly more power including the ability to issue orders to close or alter any pre-1981 drainage works without compensation to the owner, eliminating the existing requirement to work through a formal complaint process before making an order, the power to enforce drainage orders by directly closing work, and increasing maximum fines for offenses under the Act up to \$1 million per day for non-compliance; and

WHEREAS failure to comply to an order by the corporation, the corporation may register an "interest" based on the order against the title to or abstract . . . [order] for the land on which the drainage works are located and that shall apply to any subsequent owner of the land; and

WHEREAS the appeal process is abolished under Bill 44 to deal with disputes;

BE IT RESOLVED that SARM lobby the Province on behalf of all rural municipalities to rescind Bill 44.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution was passed by 64 per cent of the eligible delegates at the convention. So that was a large percentage of them that wanted to support this resolution to rescind Bill 44.

I'll read another resolution that was brought forward. It was:

WHEREAS the new Water Security Agency regulations may lead to a loss of land, increased cost to producers and loss of tax money to municipalities; and

WHEREAS these consequences have an overall negative economic impact;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Saskatchewan repeal the Water Security Agency's new regulations concerning rural land drainage as well as Bill 44.

That regulation was passed by 68 per cent of the eligible voters at the convention. So again, really stressing the fact that they would like to have this bill . . . rescind and repeal it.

Another resolution was brought forward as well:

WHEREAS some rural municipalities are experiencing flooding of land and roads near lakes, due to the natural flow being impeded by obstructions, such as beaver dams and/or natural obstructions, on private lands, where the land owner [either] refuses to remove the obstruction or allow access and these obstructions are causing hardship to farmers due to lost acres as well as threatening the integrity of the RM infrastructure; and

WHEREAS the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency's purpose is to manage water, watersheds and related land resources in Saskatchewan, has been contacted to assess and assist municipalities in dealing with these issues, [but it] is only advising municipalities to deal with it, on their own, by enacting . . . local bylaws; and

[15:00]

Whereas *The Water Security Agency Act* states, in Section 93(1) the corporation, (being that Agency) or any person acting under the corporation's instructions, has the power to enter on any land, to remove or destroy any beaver dam or natural obstruction;

Be it resolved that SARM lobby the Ministry of Environment to ensure the Water Security Agency fulfills its legislated duties by supporting the municipalities that are faced with the natural flow of water being impeded by . . . [instructions] and take the lead role . . . [in] ensuring obstructions are dealt with in a safe and effective manner.

That was passed by 83 per cent of the delegates attending the convention that were able to vote. And so I think, Mr. Speaker, it was loud and clear that *The Water Security Act* is a big focus for the rural municipal leaders, and they're paying attention, they're watching, and they'd really appreciate to have more consultation before this bill is passed through. So I hope the ministers have second thoughts and do a little bit more consultation with regards to that.

Also I was looking through some media, and it looks like just before Christmas there was a town hall meeting in Quill Lake, Mr. Speaker. There's been town hall meetings across Saskatchewan about various issues, and we've been very busy

attending a lot of them. People in the province aren't happy with a lot of the decisions that are being made by this government. But in this particular town hall, they had over 250 farmers who attended this one in Quill Lake on December 20th, and I'm just going to read one of the quotes that were made. A lot of people were really concerned about and they were watching what was going to happen with this Bill 44. But this particular person that attended the town hall indicated:

With Bill 44, I'm all for responsible drainage and new regulations. I do not believe in just giving them the heavy hand and eliminate the appeals board. I mean we have nothing to fall back if that's the case.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the importance for ensuring that people have an appeal process when decisions are made on a government level, I think was said loud and clear. Like a lot of people are concerned about that particular aspect in this bill of eliminating that Water Appeal Board.

Also when I was looking through *The Western Producer*, I found an article that "All of Saskatchewan's major crop organizations passed a resolution at CropSphere last week calling on the province to rescind or delay implementation of Bill 44."

So this bill was not only talked about at SARM. This was discussed at the CropSphere convention as well, you know, in early January. And so some of the issues that were brought there, there was a particular person that were talking . . . This would be the director of Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Association. He was the person that was bringing attention to this bill. He was going and making sure all the delegates were aware of the impact that this bill could have on the changes of the regulations.

So he indicated that . . . "He estimates there is non-permitted drainage on 150,000 quarters of land throughout the province." That's quite a bit of land. And he's concerned, also concerned about the Water Appeal Board, the loss of the Water Appeal Board, and he's quoted here: "It gives a very heavy hand to the Water Security Agency." It's putting a lot of power in one agency to make the decision and not allowing people to have that appeal process. He said, "Last year, the Water Security Agency ordered the closure of all unimproved drainage ditches in the two million acre basin and imposed a moratorium on any new projects."

So he's quoted as saying, "When we see what Water Security could do to these farmers, I do not trust them to be in charge of the water policy for the rest of the province." So this particular incident really brought some concerns to them about the potential power that the Water Security Agency could have and the decisions that they could make, and when you give one person or one agency so much power, you have that possibility. "He said the new water management policy [this is the changes to Bill 44] will take 20 to 25 percent of his acres out of production."

That could be a complete loss of profit for this particular person who was attending this convention indicated. And 20 to 25 percent of his acres, that's a lot of potential loss for him. He indicated, "It would destroy my farm." So that's really putting

people at risk. And agriculture is so important in our province that we need to ensure that any of the legislation that we make or determine aren't going to be putting farmers at risk.

So then also, Mr. Speaker, a lot of concern was with the fact that the fines were going up from \$10,000 to 1 million, the maximum fine. And I'm going to read that portion there that used to read "not more than . . . 10,000 and not more than \$1,000 for each day or part of a day . . ." And now it's just going to change to "not exceeding \$1,000,000" for each day or part of a day.

So people were very concerned about that. And nobody wants to be fined but it seems a little extreme to me. This seems kind of similar to when you're really angry at your child and you tell them that they're grounded for the whole year. Well you know that they're not going to be grounded for the whole year. That's going to be quite impossible to maintain. So it seems like we're going from one extreme to the other, and I think that language kind of concerned me, too. I was thinking \$1 million per day, that could be. That's quite a bit.

And it seems like this is stronger fines for this than other offences such as drinking and driving that could kill people, or having oil spilled in natural water sources such as river basins. We're penalizing people because of the lack of drainage. I'm wondering, is that even correct, like \$1 million? Wow.

I know you've got to have some hefty fines to discourage people from not listening to what they're legislated to do but that seemed a little extreme to me. And it seemed at this conference too, that was discussed as well, that they thought that was maybe a little bit too much.

So also it's quoted here from Myles Thorpe, the president of the Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Association, also indicated that the changes to this bill could have some "massive financial implications." So key people are really paying attention to this. He figured that ". . . 1.9 billion would be lost to the Saskatchewan economy if farmers weren't allowed to properly drain water from their land." So 1.9 billion — like I'm wondering what was the cost analysis done when the changes to this bill were done. Like was that brought up to the attention of people who were looking at these changes? Did they do a cost analysis of potential implications of the language and changes to this bill?

There seems to be a lot of unanswered questions here. So also Mr. Thorpe here says some of the unanswered questions would be: ". . . what defines an adequate outlet and whether farmers are allowed to infill." So again, having those conversations with people who are impacted and needing to answer these and be accountable to them. So he also says here, "The landowner doesn't have a lot of power left when you read the bill." So landowners aren't feeling that they have the process to appeal. They're not feeling like they have a lot of power with regards to the land, and how to control that. So those are concerns.

So a couple of other concerns I had, Mr. Speaker. I was looking and I was trying to find more information, and maybe I just wasn't looking at the right places, but why is it so important to eliminate the Water Appeal Board? I'm not understanding that process and I guess I need to learn more. Like who is on this

board, and how many cases do they deal with in a year, a month? Like I don't know. Is this a board that is used extremely a lot or maybe not so much?

And how much is this costing our government for maintaining the appeal board if we do decide to listen to some of the people who are concerned with the changes that we may make with regards to the language here? Is this going to cost a large amount of money, or is this a big change that's really not going to impact us a lot? You know, but it's going to impact people to have their say. So I would like to learn more about that.

And again I was wondering, like did they do the cost analysis of the potential financial impact of the changes to this bill? And it sounds like they're going to be using the court, the Queen's Bench, Court of Queen's Bench a lot more for ensuring that they're getting their due process done. And I would think that that would be a costly venture, using the court system a lot more and lawyers and judges and all of that that would be involved.

So I would like to see a cost analysis possibly done to the impacts of the bill, and is this something that's going to be a good, fair process?

And if we're going to eliminate the Water Appeal Board, how are we going to assure that there's fair, due process being implemented so that when people don't feel that this government is making the right decision that they have a way to voice their concerns? So it sounds like that's one of the concerns that's been brought up a lot in various places. So is this government going to assure that there's going to be a way for people to have their voice heard?

So, Mr. Speaker, again I would seriously caution this government from making . . . passing this bill and going ahead through with it without consulting all of the people that will be involved, and ensuring that you're not only just talking with them but listening to their concerns and possibly having to go back to the table and look at a way that this bill could be implemented. Because like I said, it's very important that we ensure that we have a comprehensive drainage strategy, and how we could ensure that's being done, but that people are still feeling that they have due process there.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I know a lot of my colleagues have a lot to say about this and that they are going to want to have their turn to discuss this bill and the process for that. And so with that, Mr. Speaker, I will . . . Do I move to adjourn? I'll adjourn this debate, yes. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Prince Albert Northcote has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 43, *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2016* . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No? Oh, 44? Oh, sorry. Bill 44, *The Water Security Agency Amendment Act, 2016*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

[15:15]

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 Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again I am proud to stand in my place and add to the comments on Bill 40 that I made previously as the result . . . that results from the introduction of Bill 40 which talks about the interpretation of the ability of the Crowns to sell up to 49 per cent. In other words, Mr. Speaker, an attempt to privatize the number of Crowns in the province of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I spoke at great length at the last occasion that I had to talk to the people of Saskatchewan about the specific reason why the Saskatchewan Party government is introducing an interpretation Act, which really the bill is all about. Bill 40 talks about the interpretation around privatization. What does that mean? There's all kinds of reference to what the World Bank may consider the word "privatize" to mean. There's of course other institutions and other organizations that have a wide-ranging interpretation of what privatization means.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Saskatchewan know exactly what privatization means, whether it's 1 per cent or 49 per cent, as being proposed in this particular bill. I think the people of Saskatchewan really look at the word "privatize" and a lot of them become very, very defensive, and they become very angry. And they become very disillusioned with the Sask Party because obviously, Mr. Speaker, there was a lot of assurance that the word "privatize" wouldn't be mentioned by anybody in the Assembly as it pertains to our Crowns.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a lot of people may argue with the NDP opposition as it relates to the term "privatize" and the purpose of this particular bill. And as the minister alluded to on a few occasions where he simply said this is an innocuous interpretation of the word "privatize," we're not looking at any options, obviously we want to do our homework — that was the argument that the minister gave as it pertains to this particular bill.

But as I indicated in my last foray into the debate around this particular bill, Mr. Speaker, that there was tons of examples of how the Saskatchewan Party government have moved their privatization agenda forward. I listed them at great length at the initial comments that I had on this particular bill, and basically told the people of Saskatchewan that, based on past practices, that the word "privatize" should be of great concern to the people of Saskatchewan when they are uttered by the Saskatchewan Party government or any of the members of the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker.

Now on this particular bill, if people don't want to take the word of the official opposition as it relates to this particular bill, I wanted to turn the people's attention to an article that was produced not more than six months ago, Mr. Speaker, when the

bill was first introduced in the Assembly. And I'll quote directly from the article. And this article was October 26th, 2016, and I quote:

The provincial government is introducing legislation that it says will clarify what the term "privatization" will mean in Saskatchewan.

The current Crown Corporations Public Ownership Act protects major government-owned companies from being sold, including SaskTel, SaskPower, SaskEnergy, and Saskatchewan Government Insurance.

The new Interpretation Amendment Act was introduced in the legislature Wednesday. According to a government news release, the proposed legislation would define the word "privatize," with respect to a Crown corporation, as "the transfer to the private sector of all or most of the assets, transfer of operational control, or transfer of a controlling interest of the Crown corporation."

CTV News has learned that the new definition allows for corporate restructuring, which would make it easier to sell minority interests in protected Crowns. The government says that would provide . . . necessary flexibility while maintaining the government's commitment to the Crown Corporations Public Ownership Act.

If the legislation is passed, a referendum would no longer be necessary for the government to sell off up to 49 per cent of the shares in the Crown corporations.

Now this is the part that's confusing. This is, of course, is a media article, Mr. Speaker, what they interpreted as what this particular bill would allude to. And, Mr. Speaker, the last sentence is something that's really, really confusing and concerning to a lot of people as they listen to the word "privatize" from the Saskatchewan Party benches. And again I'm going to quote that article, and this is a neutral media-based story, and the quote I would like to use again:

If the legislation is passed, a referendum would no longer be necessary for the government to sell off . . . 49 per cent of the shares in the Crown corporations.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is kind of concerning to me that when you have the whole issue around SaskTel come forward in the Assembly, I think the Premier and the members of the cabinet and the entire Sask Party caucus often spoke about the fact that since the Manitoba telephone company was purchased, Mr. Speaker, they've openly suggested and spoke about the notion around privatization of SaskTel. And, Mr. Speaker, some of the discussions and comments made in particular by the Premier, they spoke about the whole notion of putting forward a referendum, when clearly this bill states that a referendum would not be necessary if the bill is passed in its current form, because the interpretation of privatization is quite clearly contained within the bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's the confusing question that we have in the opposition ranks, is why would you at one hand suggest openly that SaskTel should be sold — as the Premier of the province has done — and then turn around and say, well before

we've done anything, we'd turn around and ask the stakeholders, and how we would ask the stakeholders is that we would do it through a referendum or we'd do it through a public vote. And then turn around and introduce legislation later on under Bill 40 saying that, well if this Bill 40 is passed, then we don't have to do a referendum. We could just simply use the description of the terminology around privatization as part of the bill to move forward on selling 49 per cent of our Crowns, in particular SaskTel.

So it's a bit confusing, Mr. Speaker, as to why the Premier would offer that particular argument saying that before anything is done . . . And I don't have the quotes directly in front of me, but I think the gist of what he was trying to say is that, if anything is done, prior to any decision being made, that he would go back to the people of Saskatchewan and, either through a referendum, that they would help make the decision around whether we should sell SaskTel or not.

And, Mr. Speaker, again doing this analysis from an independent source, the media basically looked at the bill and basically said, well if this bill is passed as it is being presented, then, Mr. Speaker, a referendum would not be necessary.

So that's kind of the concerning argument that we would make in the opposition ranks that . . . what is it? We have to make up our mind here. Is the Premier suggesting that a referendum would be in the offering? Or, as the bill indicates, that a referendum would not be necessary? Which of the two is speaking to the interests of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? Is it the Minister of Justice or is it the Premier? So these are some of the things that we obviously have to take into account.

And our earlier comments that we made last week, Mr. Speaker, when we spoke about the interest of the minority shareholders. There's people that are much more of the legal mind than I am in the opposition ranks and they look at all kinds of angles, as I indicated last time, as to the rights of minority shareholders in any corporation. And, Mr. Speaker, those rights are well defined. Those rights are very straightforward. They are also defended in the courts of Canada.

And it's also, I guess I mentioned, the right of any shareholder to make sure that they are bound by their own interest in ensuring that their return on the investment, of their investment into SaskTel, that that cannot be encumbered in any way, shape, or form, and that as minority shareholders they have certain rights and certain laws that allow them to protect their interest. Even if the corporation as a whole wants to go in a different direction, minority shareholders have a lot of influence that could stop that.

So as you look at the whole notion around privatization, there's argument from our side of the Assembly that privatization . . . What is meant by that? There are so many different interpretations, Mr. Speaker, that one has to just simply go into the dictionary, even go into the legal circles and into the international courts and really begin to research what is really meant by privatization.

And since there are thousands and thousands of interpretations, Mr. Speaker, one can basically say that that's a wide-open door

being suggested by the Sask Party. And I think it's really insulting to the people of Saskatchewan's intelligence as well when they say, well we're using the word "privatize." Well, you know, I think the people of Saskatchewan know very well that the word "privatize" could have many, many different meanings and different context, of course, depending on how it's being used. And of course those meanings vary throughout the world.

And this is where we begin the whole slippery slope around this whole interpretation. Who decides which interpretation of privatization do they use, Mr. Speaker, which official declaration of interest, if you will, when it comes to the word "privatize," the rights and responsibility of the minority shareholder? And the list goes on, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated last time, where exactly are we going to go with the terminology and interpretation and definition of privatization? Who makes those calls? And what is the definition being used by the government?

Now that being said, Mr. Speaker, again the statements of the Premier publicly, the statements of many of the Sask Party MLAs saying that SaskTel is not for sale, Mr. Speaker, and they're only looking at 49 per cent, well then, is there any offers? According to all the media sources, that was quoted by the Premier and by many members of the cabinet, that if there's any offers made by SaskTel then we would entertain those offers through a public referendum.

Well Bill 40 is quite clear, Mr. Speaker, that if this bill is being passed, guess what, folks? There isn't going to be no referendum on the sale of SaskTel. That interpretation of what privatize means and the decision to sell or not to sell will rest entirely with the Sask Party government. And given their history of selling off our Crowns as they've seen fit and when they've seen fit, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly something that people of Saskatchewan ought to take into record when they certainly evaluate whose argument is proper in this instance. Is it the government or is it the opposition that are warning people that once these corporations are sold, our Crown corporations, then they're sold forever?

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a bit of time to show how the Sask Party really messed up on a number of fronts when it comes to our Crown corporations, not just SaskTel. One of the things that we often spoke about . . . And we hear this in the Assembly quite a bit when day after day the government MLAs get up and they present petitions around the carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. And we in the opposition have accused the government of putting together what we call the carbon capture tax, and this is around the CCS project at SaskPower.

And just basically what the project is all about is really to begin the process of recovering some of the carbon that is being spewed out of our SaskPower coal-fired plants, Mr. Speaker, and to use the gas coming out of our plant to sell it to Cenovus, which is an oil and gas company. And that carbon would then go into the ground and force some of the oil up through the cracks, and so on and so forth, of the formation of land in and around some of the oil wells in the province, and of course not just in the province but other parts of Western Canada as well.

So the theory of this carbon capture sequestration process project — CCS, Mr. Speaker — is that the power station

generates a certain amount of carbon gas that's being sold to some of the gas companies. And as it's being piped to the gas company, they inject some of this carbon gas into the ground and that forces some of the oil and gas up through the cracks, therefore making the recovery of oil and gas much more efficient, much more cost-efficient, and much more effective.

So what happens now, Mr. Speaker, is that the government, through the Sask Party, put together this deal with Cenovus. And what they said was, we will spend the money to put this carbon capture process into place. We'll spend the money. It's a \$1.5 billion project for the people of Saskatchewan. And then what happens is the people of Saskatchewan will pay that \$1.5 billion cost, but we'll generate some gas. We'll try and capture some of the gas that we said we would through this carbon capture storage strategy, and then we would sell you that gas so you're able to transfer it to your oil fields, pump it into the ground, and secrete more oil and gas to your pumps.

Now the company, the oil and gas company, you know, they kind of like that deal because it obviously does a number of things, Mr. Speaker. It sequesters carbon into the soil and it also helps generate more profits for the oil and gas company. And it makes the recovery of some of the harder gases and oil to access deep in the ground, well it makes it much more affordable to do it with gas overall.

[15:30]

So they signed an agreement with a number of companies, in particular one particular company, Cenovus. So the government got on their soapbox and they basically said what they're going to do is they're going to have a carbon capture technology at our power plants, and we're going to capture a lot of the carbon that we generally emit in the air. We're going to sell that to Cenovus, and they're going to take it and they're going to pump it into the ground where it should be pumped into, and then they're going to push more oil and gas so everybody in this world will be happy.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what happens is, if you look at some of the initial problems at the site and the fact that there's some agreement signed by the provincial government when it came to the operation of our Crowns — don't forget, this is all about the Crowns, interpretation of selling some of the Crowns — and, Mr. Speaker, Bill 40 alludes to that whole notion.

So, Mr. Speaker, we spent \$1.5 billion on this whole technology, and the people of Saskatchewan, with great fanfare, the people of Saskatchewan were told this is going to be a great idea for the environment, for the economy, for the oil sector, and to make sure that, you know, that we support our oil and gas sector.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I just want to share with you what happened. What happened was the current minister and the current government really didn't think these things through properly. And what happens is that, at the end of the day, when they're touting the fact that this process was working so well, we find out that many, many times that the carbon capture process, if you will, only accounted for 50 per cent of what their projected targets were on an annual basis. So while they're bragging about the carbon that's being taken out of the air, Mr.

Speaker, they're failing miserably to try and achieve those targets, and they didn't tell the people of Saskatchewan that they were failing miserably. And what happens as a result is that if you have contracts with the oil and gas companies, guess what? You better fulfill those contracts because they expect those carbon, the carbon gas to arrive at their stations to be used for the recovery of oil and gas.

So what happened now, Mr. Speaker, is that because they couldn't get their act together — the current government — in which they really hampered SaskPower with their constant interference, Mr. Speaker, what happened was, in 2014 and 2015 there was a delivery shortfall of the carbon gas to Cenovus. So what happened is we cut them a cheque. We cut them a cheque for 12 million bucks in that year.

For 2015-2016 it happened again, Mr. Speaker, where the Sask Party couldn't get their act together as it pertains to the operation of the CCS technology. So once again we cut another cheque to Cenovus for \$7.4 million. In 2015, operating and maintenance and administration, the expense we had to pay there was 13 million.

Again in 2016 we had to pay another \$11.2 million around operating, maintenance, and administration. In 2015, Mr. Speaker, we spent \$18.5 million on replacement for what I think is amine, which is a-m-i-n-e. Again the same cost in 2016-2017 was 20-plus million dollars for the same problem that occurred in 2015-2016. In 2016-2017, Mr. Speaker, penalties for delivery of the carbon gas to Cenovus was again \$1.2 million.

So as you look at all of these things, Mr. Speaker, we're finding very quickly and very clearly that this is one example of how the Sask Party has interfered with the Crown corporations' operations, to really discredit the Crown corporations and interfere politically with the Crown corporations. Because quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, when that happens, when you have politicians driving our Crown sector and making things difficult for them, this is where you begin to see money being taken out of our Crown corporations and sent to companies that sign contracts with SaskPower and don't get the carbon gas that they signed up for.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would point out that when you have efforts to try and take carbon out of the air, which a lot of people in Saskatchewan overall support, when you try and make sure that carbon is something that doesn't belong in the air — it's much more proper it be in the ground — that obviously that affects the global emissions of greenhouse gases. And as we all know in Saskatchewan, we have coal-fired plants that really contribute a lot to the greenhouse gas emissions overall as a province. And the rate for the greenhouse gas emissions by our Crown corporations is quite high, in particular SaskPower. So we have this notion that yes, it's a publicly owned Crown corporation; yes, they have to make profits, Mr. Speaker. There's no question about that in our minds.

But by the same token, this whole environmental stewardship issue comes to the forefront. A lot of people in Canada and throughout the world in different countries and certainly even people in our own backyards and people in our communities, they want Saskatchewan to do the right thing and fulfill their

obligations around reducing greenhouse gases. So as we look at the whole notion around greenhouse gases, Mr. Speaker, we ought to do our part as a province, and certainly the Crown corporations play a vital role in that regard.

So that being said, Mr. Speaker, SaskPower, as they undertake this notion of trying to capture carbon much more effectively, we have to make sure that we are constant and vigilant in making sure that the costs are being monitored. And this is the folly. How did the Sask Party really interfere with this process, Mr. Speaker? Well first of all they pushed the SaskPower executives off the way so they can be on the stage and be seen by the media as people that are doing all of this when in fact the SaskPower executives had the foresight to figure out that if we took carbon out of the air, what can we do with it?

And, Mr. Speaker, what happened next was the politicians across the way here, they decided that they better hide all this information from the people of Saskatchewan that in fact the carbon capture process wasn't working 100 per cent, that in fact on many occasions it was only operating 50 per cent because they still were not at that stage where they're full capacity. And yet they kept that information from the public.

And lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, we got information in the opposition that they've been doing that on numerous occasion. And the reason why they hit some of these shortcomings for this technology, Mr. Speaker, is because they didn't want the people of Saskatchewan to know that they were actually paying money out as a result of this lack of volume of carbon gas that was promised to companies like Cenovus. And what the Sask Party didn't want people to know is that they were actually paying an oil and gas company money to get rid of some of the carbon. And the worst part of it all, Mr. Speaker, is not that they as a government and as a party were paying it; it was the average consumer, which is you and I and the business world.

So what happened, Mr. Speaker, on SaskPower as it pertains to our Crown corporations, this is why Bill 40 is so worrisome. It's because the activity in the history of the Sask Party as it pertains to our Crowns is one that has a checkered history.

They've made no bones about the fact that they have sold a number of our Crown corporations already. They will continue looking at those options, Mr. Speaker. They will play with some of the wording around the terminology, "privatization." They have mixed messages before an election and after an election. They have these kind of bills that can come forward where later on it turns out that they don't have to have a referendum on the future of SaskTel. These are some of the reasons why a lot of people in Saskatchewan do not trust the Saskatchewan Party government when it comes to our Crowns, and more and more and more of those issues in that statement from the people of Saskatchewan is coming forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, the theory behind the Crowns is this: they create jobs; they're good for the economy; they have good services; and the prices that they give to the people of Saskatchewan are very competitive. And so they're good for the economy. They create jobs. They return dividends to the people of Saskatchewan, and it's something. And I think to a certain extent that the Saskatchewan Party caucus is jealous of the Crowns because they do things for Saskatchewan that the

Saskatchewan Party caucus will never do. And that is create jobs, provide good service, create dividends for the people of Saskatchewan, and keep the prices attractive.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the Saskatchewan Party to stop playing with the Crown corporation sector because people obviously are concerned about what's going to happen to our Crowns, and we continue seeing that kind of activity by the politicians across the way. And our message to them as the official opposition is that if you don't know what you're doing when it comes to the Crown corporations, stop interfering with the processes and stop trying to be in front of the cameras every time there is discussion around the Crowns, to try and confuse the people and take credit for your politics in some way, shape, or form.

Now, Mr. Speaker, going back to the carbon capture technology, the people of Saskatchewan paid \$1.5 billion for that project, and they continue paying to different oil companies each year as they fail to meet their mark. And I gave you various examples of what they were paying for Cenovus. Now the people of Saskatchewan can say, well isn't that the right thing to do? The answer is yes. If we can take out more carbon out of the air, then we should make every effort to do so.

The problem is that the people of Saskatchewan are quickly beginning to realize is that through mismanagement and waste, the Saskatchewan Party now has put that whole technology and has put the whole concept around the carbon capture on uneven footing because people are beginning to doubt that technology. Why? Because the Sask Party in their way of dealing with the Crowns is absolutely ludicrous because they continue interfering in things they don't understand.

So our advice from the opposition is that if you don't know what you're doing when it comes to a Crown corporation, maybe you should keep your hands off them and let the people of Saskatchewan decide through an election, as opposed to a bill or as opposed to a referendum that would be manipulated and poorly worded for, you know, for their interest and not for the people of Saskatchewan's interest.

So the overwhelming problem we have on this whole carbon capture boondoggle, as we explain on this side, is that the people of Saskatchewan are paying, Mr. Speaker. Every single resident in our province that have a power bill to their home, we are paying that. The farmers are paying that, Mr. Speaker. The business community is paying that. The university is paying that. So the carbon capture tax that's being put onto our power bill is compliments of the Saskatchewan Party government because they messed up here, Mr. Speaker.

They interfered at critical times. They didn't communicate to the people of Saskatchewan. They inked deals that they didn't know what they were getting into. The net effect is that the people of Saskatchewan now are on the hook for a \$1.5 billion carbon capture and storage project that the Sask Party made sure it didn't work.

But despite that, Mr. Speaker, SaskPower continues remaining a strong Crown. And I think the people of Saskatchewan should be very, very careful when we have the Saskatchewan Party representatives, MLAs, speak about privatization because

people of Saskatchewan do not want to see their Crowns privatized in any way, shape, or form. And, Mr. Speaker, I think the Saskatchewan Party MLAs hear that and in their own arrogance decided not to listen to that. And, Mr. Speaker, that always spells trouble for the people across the way there because people will not be ignored when it comes to our Crown corporations.

So I say this to the people that may be listening to this particular bill, the bill excludes the Premier's offer to have a referendum. The bill states, that if we proceed with the interpretation as designed in Bill 40, that a referendum would not have to be held despite what the Premier has said in the past that he'd go back to the people of Saskatchewan. We need to make sure people across the province hear that loud and clear.

Now the other point I would raise, Mr. Speaker, is that whether it's SaskPower's carbon capture project or whether it's the smart meter fiasco, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party is damaging the credibility of our Crowns. And they're putting the Crowns into huge debt and some of that debt is because of their interference as a political watchdog for our Crown corporations. And the problem with that, Mr. Speaker, is that we're all paying.

[15:45]

Every day when we hear the Sask Party get up and present their petition on the carbon pricing or carbon tax they talk about, Mr. Speaker, there's two things we say on the opposition side. Well we should take a mirror and have a look at yourselves because you put in a carbon capture tax for all the people of Saskatchewan — for the farm community, for the business community, for the schools, the institutions, and the average person. The carbon capture tax put in place by the Sask Party government through the CCS technology is on the power bills as we speak. So we sit here and listen to their petitions, and we all kind of laugh at that because we know exactly what they're doing.

And the worst part about the whole process, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is you and I know when a time comes for the federal government to come and drop some money off on the refund of the carbon tax as they call it, the carbon credit, Mr. Speaker, well I'm pretty certain that the Premier and the cabinet will take that money. And they'll probably spend it the way they want to see fit, the most politically way that they see fit.

So from the argument perspective, Mr. Speaker, they're not practising what they're preaching right now when it comes to carbon tax. They have put in a process in place through SaskPower and it's called a carbon capture tax. And every single one of our people in this province are paying that tax, compliments of the Saskatchewan Party government. And, Mr. Speaker, look at your power bills. You will see that power bills are going up. They're increasing, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the exact percentage, but the last number of months we've seen the increase going 5 per cent, 6 per cent.

And it's going to get worse, Mr. Speaker. It's going to get worse because the Saskatchewan Party continues shipping out dollars to companies that they made commitments for and taking a certain volume of gas from the process. And they couldn't deliver, and now they've got to pay Cenovus and other

oil companies a certain amount of money. As I mentioned, first year, 2014-2015, they sent them a \$12 million cheque, compliments of you and I.

Because as we pay our power bills, Mr. Speaker, as every single person in this province pays a power bill, that extra cost in that bill — that's threatening families, that's threatening businesses, that is threatening farms in our province, Mr. Speaker — that carbon capture tax is a direct result of Sask Party policy and no one else, Mr. Speaker. So look at your power bills. Look at your power bills and you will notice from two years, three years ago, you're paying a significant amount of money, a lot more money on your power bill, Mr. Speaker, than you were before. Why? Because the Sask Party has bungled every project that the Crown corporations have brought forward for their own political purposes, Mr. Speaker, for their own political purposes.

So the carbon capture tax is a real thing that the Sask Party put in place. It is a real thing. And we sit here and we smile at them when they get up and they present their so-called petitions, Mr. Speaker, about the carbon tax being implemented by the federal government. Well, Mr. Speaker, they've adopted that idea three years ago. They've adopted the same idea. They have put together a carbon capture tax for the people of Saskatchewan that we are paying in our power bill each and every month, each and every month. So what we're going to do, Mr. Speaker, is we're going to tell the people of Saskatchewan. Every time a Sask Party member gets up and presents a petition on the carbon tax, we're going to say, look in the mirror because you're the one that gave us this carbon capture tax. That's exactly what you've done.

And if you don't think . . . If you don't think that carbon capture tax put on by the Sask Party government is costing the business people, it's costing the families and the farms in our province, Mr. Speaker, I would ask every single individual in the province of Saskatchewan to look at their power bill and compare it from two years ago and you're paying much more. You're paying much more because the Sask Party government has decided to put this carbon capture tax on your bill. The business people, look at your bill. The farm families, look at your bill. The average citizen, look at your bill. The institutions, look at your power bill and do a comparison.

Has our power bills been steadily increasing under the Sask Party? The answer is yes, it has been, Mr. Speaker. The answer is absolutely yes. The power bills are going up compliments of the Sask Party because they decided to put a carbon capture tax as part of their policy. And yet they have the audacity to stand today to present petitions of people who want to fight like the opposition fight the federal government in imposing a carbon levy against our community and against our province.

We stand with the people of Saskatchewan. But it's hard for us on this side of the Assembly to stomach that kind of theatrics by the Saskatchewan Party bringing those petitions every day, at the same time they're digging in each and every person's pocket in the province of Saskatchewan to help pay for their carbon capture tax scheme that's going to cost us for years and years and years.

So on one hand, Mr. Speaker, as we sit there and listen to their

petitions . . . I tell people in my constituency, I'm telling people throughout Saskatchewan today: keep watching what they do because the ears and eyes of the people of Saskatchewan are what's helping our opposition out because we're getting a lot of information on what the costs are for various families and businesses and people. And they're not happy with the fact that the Sask Party has bungled every project that the Crown corporations have brought forward.

And, Mr. Speaker, we think that that bungling is . . . I think it's on purpose. Some people say it's by design. I say, well easy. I don't give them that much credit that it's by design that they're bungling up the Crown corporations. I think they're just doing that because they're so addicted to their philosophical position that Saskatchewan Party wants to get rid of the Crowns and this is their one way of doing it, Mr. Speaker.

I would point out that under Bill 40 again, Mr. Speaker, that as you have people paying this carbon capture tax, it has a profound negative effect on the overall economy of the province. So I tell the people whenever I get the chance to speak that the carbon capture tax is real. It is not going away. It is compliments, direct compliments of the Sask Party government. That carbon capture tax that's put in place, every single one of us are paying that right now. Every single one of us are paying that carbon capture tax compliments of the Sask Party.

And when they get up and they bemoan the federal Liberal government's plan for a carbon pricing scheme, Mr. Speaker, they should, as I've mentioned, look in the mirror. Because between them and the federal Liberals, they're taxing people of Saskatchewan a ridiculous amount; not so much for their insight as to how the Crowns could become a big part of our economy, but for the fact that they do want to, they do want to betray the trust of the Crowns so they can justify how they would sell these Crowns later on.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, there is a carbon capture tax. It is real. It is put on your power bills. It is a direct result of the Sask Party's bungling and interference in our Crown corporations. You, we, as taxpayers of Saskatchewan, are paying oil and gas companies such as Cenovus, penalties each and every year; and certainly the years that I've pointed out because the Saskatchewan Party tried to hide that information from the people of Saskatchewan.

So there's no question in my mind, as they get up and read off their carbon tax petition from the citizens that they're talking to . . . I would suggest to each and every Sask Party MLA: tell them about your carbon capture scheme. Why won't they tell them that they're paying those bills? The increases that you see in the power bill is being paid by people from Shellbrook. They're being paid by people from Big River. They're being paid by people from Indian Head, from Prince Albert, from Saskatoon, from Regina, the business community, the family farms. Everyone in Saskatchewan is paying this carbon capture tax that the Saskatchewan Party has designed for us. And as a result of that, our power bills are going up and up.

And, Mr. Speaker, pretty soon a lot of families that are losing their jobs, losing their homes, losing hope because the Sask Party government has mismanaged our economy so bad that all

of a sudden these increased costs that are on our power bills may be the breaking point for many families' budgets, and you'll find that many families are indeed struggling through this whole process.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again sticking with the CCS technology, I was again speaking to a number of people outside of the Assembly here about how the federal government's implementation of the carbon pricing scheme is going to affect the province overall. And we in the opposition do not agree that implementing something on Saskatchewan from the federal government, when they impose things on our province, that is not the best strategy overall.

So as an opposition, we think that perhaps there should have been some really solid negotiations, that if the federal government was insisting on putting this into place, why wasn't Saskatchewan at the table negotiating and pushing hard to make sure that any kind of revenues that may be derived from the carbon surcharge put on Saskatchewan businesses, Mr. Speaker, that we could use it in a most intelligent and certainly in a most effective manner?

Now what happened, Mr. Speaker, is that the Saskatchewan Party walked away from that process and then they started bringing these petitions to the Assembly as a government, saying, we don't want the federal government imposing anything on us. And we in the opposition agree. We shouldn't have the federal government impose tougher sanctions or tougher laws against us without our consultation and our participation. We absolutely agree.

But when we see the Sask Party walk away from the table, Mr. Speaker, on this carbon tax as they make reference to it, Mr. Speaker, we tell them, well first of all you have a carbon capture tax you put in place already; we're paying for that for a long time. And if you're in principle against the whole concept around the carbon tax as you've indicated in your petitions, then you would assume that they wouldn't take the money that was going to come back from the federal government in these negotiations that they've had with other provinces such as Saskatchewan and . . . or such as Alberta and BC and so on and so forth.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? I bet you every dime that I have in my pocket today that they will take the money. They sit here in the Assembly. First of all they implement the carbon capture tax, and they moan about the federal government implementing something that they don't like, but they'll take the money. They'll take the money. So the principled position that they stand in the Assembly on, this carbon capture tax, well this side of the Assembly, we don't buy it because (a) they've put a tax in for carbon capture, and (b) they'll take the money.

So which is it? Are you opposed? Are you opposed to this plan, or are you not? And that's why, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the Assembly we look at the theatrics of the Saskatchewan Party of walking out on the federal process to try and strike a deal for Saskatchewan's interests, if there is that possibility . . . And since you've implemented a carbon capture tax, well you're masters at that, so why don't you figure this out for the people of Saskatchewan's future. And, Mr. Speaker, they simply walked out.

But I can tell the people of Saskatchewan this, is that they will take the money. And mark my words, mark my words, they will take that money, and they'll make a great announcement or some fanfare of how they're going to use the carbon levy that's being imposed by Ottawa, on how that they're going to use it under certain projects. You mark my words. And this is the reason why, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the Assembly, we don't trust the Saskatchewan Party when it comes to our Crown corporations because they don't practise what they preach, but they'll take every cent that they can.

And yet they'll sit here each day presenting petitions for what purpose? Because they're not fooling anyone, Mr. Speaker. They're not fooling a soul. The fact is that they've put their own tax in place already, and they'll take the money when this credit comes due from the federal government. And they'll still continue playing the games in the Assembly pretending to be so concerned around carbon, Mr. Speaker, when they can't practise taking carbon out of the air. They've taxed us so heavily already, and they'll take the money from the federal government all the while bemoaning this whole notion around carbon tax when they are exactly doing that.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we look at SaskPower, there is no question that they have put into place a big, big problem for the people of Saskatchewan to deal with over the many, many years where every single man, woman, and child will be paying through their power bills for their bungling of the SaskPower carbon capture storage concept. And, Mr. Speaker, they also will be taking the cash, as I mentioned, from the federal government. So they're not fooling anyone.

Now I want to switch gears a bit, Mr. Speaker, from the carbon capture storage boondoggles that have been very apparent over the years. I think, I think that the people of Saskatchewan really are beginning to pay attention to what the Sask Party's doing as it relates to our Crowns. Bill 40 is an example. They tried to make this an innocuous bill. It hasn't got a whole lot of interpretations, a whole lot of paper to it, but rest assured, Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, Bill 40 is all about interpretation. They want to interpret this bill for their own political purposes.

[16:00]

And the reason why it's worrisome to us in Saskatchewan is . . . Again I go back to the history. In Saskatchewan we have three or four, if I could use the phrase, "assets," Mr. Deputy Speaker, and these assets really help us in our economy in developing our economy and remaining strong as a province. And the assets include the large corporate and the small business community. These giants and these worker, business community, investors, and so on and so forth, they come to our province and they invest in our province. And that's one of the key components of any economy is to attract that investment as I've indicated time and time again.

And some of these corporations have come, set up in Saskatchewan, that come develop our resources, they create a lot of jobs. They pay royalties to the province, and they certainly stimulate economies of various communities that they are involved with. So whether it is potash, Mr. Speaker, whether it's oil and gas and uranium and the agricultural sector, these are all . . . I look at the farm communities and the farm

families as very industrious builders of our economy, and strengthening of the province's economy is one of their callings in life. And they're doing a remarkable job of making things happen for Saskatchewan.

The other important component, as I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, is to look at the engagement of the labour movement themselves. I think the fact that we have a lot of people involved with the unions, and I've been, I've sat with many of the leaders over time, and they appreciate the fact that many of their members need to have mortgage-paying jobs and the fact that they have families to feed and that employment and opportunity in Saskatchewan cannot happen unless you have a really good, strong labour force. And when I say a good, strong labour force, that they are highly skilled and that they're very good workers and that they can contribute much to the economy of Saskatchewan.

So we look at the private sector involvement. We look at their investment. We look at the role of the labour force and the fact that they're pretty important overall. And then you look at the Crown sector, Mr. Speaker. Having Crowns owned by the Saskatchewan government is an incredible asset for them to have. There's a lot of services that would not be provided for the costs that are there now, and yet people continue not recognizing that from the Saskatchewan Party side.

Now when I talked to a number of people within the conservative movement, I tell them about the taxes. And as we all know in Saskatchewan, we need more people in our province. We need many more people to come forward, as I've indicated. We need to keep our royalties and our taxes competitive and as low as we can. And there's a number of reasons for that, Mr. Speaker. When we talk about having our taxes remain as competitive as they can, it's all part of the process to attract more investment, and we on the NDP side certainly see that possibility.

But, Mr. Speaker, if you look, if you look at the role of the Crowns, they provide incredible opportunity for our people. And how do they provide that opportunity? Well as I mentioned, they create jobs. They subsidize the cost of providing services in our province. They provide services to people. They provide these services at a very reasonable cost.

So some of the businesses that come to our province, I can guarantee you that part of their analysis of why they come to Saskatchewan incorporates this whole notion around the Crowns. So as they look at the insurance costs for their vehicles as they plan a major expansion in the province, well if the insurance rates are much lower than Alberta, as an example, then those analyses help the companies make the decision to come to Saskatchewan.

If they look at services, they look at the fact that we have cellphone coverage where cellphone coverage doesn't exist in other provinces, Mr. Speaker. I think it's at the base of the Rocky Mountains in Alberta where you cannot get cell coverage. And Alberta is a province that has three times the population that the province has and yet they can't have cell coverage in a very basic tourist area. But, Mr. Speaker, you can have cell coverage in Pinehouse. You can have cell coverage in Green Lake. You can have cell coverage in Ryerson Lake. It's a

community that straddles the Alberta and Saskatchewan border.

So the reason why we are able to have all these services all over the place, Mr. Speaker, is because SaskTel has decided that expansion within their boundaries and their province is always the important thing to do. And this is where you talk about corporate mentality. This is where you talk about Saskatchewan people's value when it comes to the Crowns, and this is where you talk about improved services.

So companies will look at a wide variety of issues before they will locate to any jurisdiction. Having affordable insurance rates, having good services like cellphone and technology available, and certainly having competitive tax rates, these all add, these all add to the strength of Saskatchewan overall.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when I talk about the importance of the Crowns when it comes to our economy, I want to point out some of the money, some of the money that the Crown corporations have given to the people of Saskatchewan. And in particular I want to talk to the conservative population that talk about, you know, the Crowns overall. A lot of my friends in the conservative circles talk to me about the taxation rate, where they're saying, well you got to be careful on not having the taxes going too high because it's a disincentive for a lot of people to spend.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again going back to some of the conservatives that I speak with, they understand that the Crowns are really important to Saskatchewan. A lot of them are very strong and ardent supporters of the Crown corporations. They think the Crown corporations present stability, which is a really key word. A lot of the folks in the conservative corners that I speak with, they talk about having the security of the Crown corporations there. They know it's pretty darn important. They like the fact that there's jobs. They certainly like that. They like the fact that there's services. That's another added attribute of the Crowns. They like the fact that these prices are very, very competitive, and the fact that we own them.

So security of the Crown corporations is something that a lot of people within the conservative movement really, really, truly appreciate. That being said, Mr. Speaker, when they ask me questions, what exactly . . .

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Requesting leave, Mr. Speaker, to introduce guests.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Leader of the Opposition has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, to you and

through you, seated in your gallery, it's my pleasure to be joined here today by a good friend and by his son. I'm joined by Ted Jaleta, someone who's no stranger to many in this Assembly, and his son, six-year-old son Jacob here today. I had a nice meeting with both of them just a few minutes ago. These are two, well these two hang around town and give back a whole bunch to our community in many, many ways. I know Jacob soaks up all things sport — soccer, swimming, running, like his dad. And certainly, Ted's wife and partner, Mary Jo Jaleta, is a special individual as well in our community.

Ted, as you would know, is a champion in every aspect of that word, someone who's persevered through challenge that most of us could only ever imagine. Someone who at a young age was on the Ethiopian Olympic training team, the national team, the training team, and due to horrendous circumstances and crisis at that point in time made his way — a long journey, a long, long, journey — to Canada as a refugee.

Ted is someone who has given back to our community for decades, who's spent his life as a civil servant, delivering for the people of our province and our country, and someone who's quite simply been one of Canada's very best runners of all time. A champion from Saskatchewan here, and someone who has been a champion in his sport, but someone who has always given back to the community in so many other ways.

He has legions of followers that he supports in the healthy pursuits of being active or becoming championship runners. He has a group called the Jaleta Pacers that you'll often see around this Assembly and around the lake as they train and as they compete. And they go off around the world and compete in places like Boston. He certainly has developed some incredible athletes on that front.

But someone who gives back time and time again. Someone who organizes a race — the Royal Road Race — that has given dollars back to most recently, Dr. Hanna School to their early learning program; to Chili for Children through to the Early Learning Centre; and many other programs.

Anyways, certainly Ted Jaleta is somebody who's a friend to many in this Assembly and someone I'm proud to count as a friend. He was our candidate for the Saskatchewan NDP in Coronation Park this last election and continues to maintain a high level of involvement on that front as well, Mr. Speaker.

He's also come on board as our training coach, so he's the captain of the team for the NDP in the upcoming Regina Police Half Marathon where we've got a little gentle challenge with members opposite, and we're looking forward to that.

But I ask all members of this Assembly to welcome Ted Jaleta to his Assembly. Someone who's . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You know, we have a noisy member from Cannington. Doesn't get up to say boo about things day after day, but he's going to heckle while . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I would invite the member to conclude his introduction.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I ask all members in this Assembly to welcome somebody who's a true champion and someone who's been a tireless advocate and a true community builder, Mr. Ted Jaleta. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

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

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I too am planning on joining Mr. Jaleta on the long-distance circuit because I think it's time for us to get in shape because we're going to be so busy running government here in less than three years that we're going to have to make sure that we stay in top shape, Mr. Speaker. So I welcome Mr. Jaleta to the Assembly as well, and his son.

And obviously I think a lot of the debates around the Crown corporations are going to serve us well in the future as we certainly tell the people of Saskatchewan the folly around Bill 40 and the importance of us paying attention to the wording and certainly the games that the Saskatchewan Party play with our Crown corporations.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I was speaking about the tax rate, and I want to go down the list of the CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] dividends that are being paid to the province of Saskatchewan. Now this part's really important, Mr. Speaker. Every year the dividends being paid by a Crown corporation — SaskPower, SaskTel, SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] — every year the Sask Party government gets money from the Crown corporations. And, Mr. Speaker, the important part in all of this is the fact that as they get this money, Mr. Speaker, the Crown corporations don't tell them how to spend it. They simply pay it off as a dividend and that's that.

And this is the importance that I speak about, of how much value that the Crown corporations offer to the people of Saskatchewan, not just in the jobs and in the services, Mr. Speaker, but more importantly to the fact that they give us dividends each and every year.

Now I'm sure the discouraging part of the Crown corporations is that as they hand over much of their hard-earned money as Crowns, they have no control of that money overall. And when you see the current government with their bypass scandal, with the whole notion around the carbon capture technology, Mr. Speaker, and the smart meters fiasco, and the fact that they spent millions on lean, the list goes on, Mr. Speaker, of how the Sask Party has squandered, has squandered a lot of money over the last eight, nine years, Mr. Speaker. They've really put Saskatchewan backwards in the sense of the financial growth and the financial stability we had not more than eight or nine years ago since they formed government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the money that we get from the Crown corporations is handed over to the Saskatchewan Party government and the Saskatchewan Party government, as I said, have taken those dividends. And yet at the same token they have not done any justice to those dividends that they received from our Crowns by squandering that money. And through just mismanagement, scandal, and waste, Mr. Speaker, they have put this province in a really bad situation, and as we'll see evidence of that Wednesday.

[16:15]

The people of Saskatchewan had no idea just how bad it was prior to the last election, Mr. Speaker, but they know it now, and they continue seeing this kind of action by the Sask Party government. And we on this side of the Assembly say, shame on them. Shame on them for taking a booming economy, a growing population, money in the bank — a lot of money in the bank — great opportunity, great hope, Mr. Speaker, and dashing that because, why? Because we've said it time and time again: conservatives cannot manage government. They simply do not know how. They've done it to Saskatchewan in the '80s, and they're back again, Mr. Speaker, and they're doing it to us again.

So we within the NDP opposition know full well that the voters feel a lot of betrayal. And they're finding that betrayal coming to them each and every day, as we saw witness here out in front on the steps of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, where people within the labour force movement came to show their strength and their desire to get to the bottom of what the Saskatchewan Party's doing wrong for our province and for our Crowns.

So I go back to the earlier comment I made with the conservatives, Mr. Speaker. I tell them, yes you like the stability of the Crowns, but do you actually know how much the Crown corporations are actually giving to the government? And they would say, well what's that got to do with my argument around taxation? Well what happens is the Crown corporations actually subsidize the taxes that we have to charge people to provide the services for our province, and as people that are fiscally conservative, you want to keep the taxes low, the royalties low, so you can attract more companies. I think absolutely everybody understands that logic, including the NDP.

So, Mr. Speaker, in 2007 the dividend for Saskatchewan, when the Sask Party came into power, was 200 million — \$200 million, Mr. Speaker, what the SaskTel, the SaskPower and the SGI paid to the province of Saskatchewan. That saved every taxpayer \$200 each year, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In 2008, 2008, the dividend paid by the Crown corporations was \$365 million — a million dollars a day we got from the Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker. That saved every taxpayer in the province \$361.29, Mr. Speaker.

In 2009 when they sold off Saskferco and NewGrade, that was the year they were sold off, Mr. Speaker, we netted from the Crown corporations \$755 million that year. And that saves every taxpayer \$735.90 each and every year.

In 2010, the Crowns paid a dividend to the Sask Party of \$266 million, Mr. Speaker. That saved every taxpayer \$255, for each and every taxpayer.

In 2011, it wasn't as great a year, yet the dividend paid to the Sask Party government was \$128.5 million — another \$121.35 less for each and every taxpayer.

In 2012, Mr. Speaker, the dividend was \$280.1 million, which saved every taxpayer in Saskatchewan \$193 in taxes that year.

In 2013, Mr. Speaker, \$361 million was given to the Sask Party by the Crown corporations of Saskatchewan. That saved every taxpayer \$329.98.

In 2014, another \$206 million was given to the Sask Party from the Crown corporations. That saved every taxpayer \$185 a year.

In 2015-2016, last year, Mr. Speaker, \$297.2 million was paid as a dividend from the Saskatchewan Crown corporations to the Sask Party. And that saved every single person in the province of Saskatchewan \$263.52, Mr. Speaker, for every taxpayer — money that the taxpayer didn't have to pay each and every year.

So as you calculate since 2006 and 2016, Mr. Speaker, it is a huge amount of money that the Crown corporations made for the people of Saskatchewan. But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, it saved a lot of taxpayers thousands of dollars, that these Crowns are able to subsidize the services in the province using our Crown corporations. And, Mr. Speaker, a lot of taxpayers in the province of Saskatchewan know this. They appreciate that.

And that's why the whole notion of selling off our Crowns — even through bills of this sort, trying to identify what privatization is all about, Mr. Speaker — is foolish. It's absolutely foolish. Because as I said, there's services that are attached to this. There's jobs that are attached to this. There are those costs that are really affordable for many families. But more so, Mr. Speaker, the dividends that we get from our Crown corporations is remarkable. This is money coming back to the province, money that we can use for our highways, we can use for health care, we can use for education.

And what is totally beyond me, Mr. Speaker, is why doesn't the Sask Party get it? Why don't they get it? Why don't they just leave our Crowns alone? Because the Crowns are highly valued in the province of Saskatchewan. It is absolutely, as I mentioned, foolish for them to think that they can make money off the sale of these Crowns to try and backfill the debt that they put the province of Saskatchewan in, Mr. Speaker. In the short eight years that they've been in power, they have squandered, as I said time and time again, they have squandered the future — our future, as people of Saskatchewan. And I say, shame on them for doing that.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is always, always important to pay attention to what the Crown sector is doing. If you do an analysis right now overall for the people of Saskatchewan, they will simply say to the Sask Party, leave our Crowns alone. I think people in every corner of this province have pointed out time and time again that the Crowns are highly valued. Crown corporations are highly valued.

Where is it, where is it written, Mr. Speaker, that because the Sask Party come along with their philosophy that they have the mandate and the right to sell off our Crowns without going to the people of Saskatchewan?

Well Bill 40 articulates that they do have that option, and that's why Bill 40 is dangerous. I think if they were serious about not selling the Crowns, you wouldn't have a bill like this before the Legislative Assembly. You can withdraw that bill tomorrow morning just like that. Withdraw this bill. Give the people of Saskatchewan back the right for them to have a say when it comes to the Crown corporations of our province. I think they have a right to have their say, to have their say, Mr. Speaker.

So pull this interpretation bill. There's no value and there's no reason for it because, as the Premier said in this Assembly, we have no intention of selling SaskTel. Well why does the bill remain? Why does the bill remain? When the Premier gets up and says, well we'll have a referendum before we do anything, what we say, well the bill says you don't have to have a referendum if it's passed in its current state, in its current form.

So guess what, if the backbenchers of the Sask Party want a memo, I'll be very clear and write them a memo saying, your bill allows the sale of up to 49 per cent of SaskTel without going to a referendum. So if any Sask Party backbencher thinks they can go back into their constituency and have a big meeting around a referendum for the sale of SaskTel, guess what, folks, you can't. That option doesn't exist.

So maybe it's time that they start paying attention to their bills instead of blindly clapping as the Premier gets up and talks about the future of our Crowns because, Mr. Speaker, I think quickly they will realize, like we do in the opposition, we don't trust the Premier when it comes to the future of the Crown corporations. And Bill 40, as long as it's in the order paper, proves our point that there is an nefarious agenda behind our Crown corporations, and it's sad to see.

It's sad to see, Mr. Speaker. It is very sad to see that, just a year after an election where there's all kinds of assurances that Crowns wouldn't be up for sale. Well guess what, folks, they're up for sale. And once they're gone, and once they're gone, Mr. Speaker, they'll be gone forever.

And the revenues generated by these Crowns, Mr. Speaker, are impressive. The amount of workers that have built their careers around our Crown corporations is also very impressive. The services that they provide is impressive, Mr. Speaker, and the cost that they give to the customers to provide these services is also very impressive. So why would you want to even entertain the notion around interpretation of 49 per cent ownership of our Crowns? What is that all about? What is the purpose of this bill, Mr. Speaker?

That is the fundamental reason why we have debates in this Assembly: so we're able to talk about the importance, the virtues of our Crowns. And Mr. Speaker, this is something that is very, very serious for the people of Saskatchewan to watch and to learn and to listen to what is being said about this bill because there's a lot of worry when it comes to our Crown corporations.

Now I don't have a calculator in front of me — I'm sure this could be done very quickly — but over the last 10 years in terms of what is being . . . what the value is of all the dividends in the last 10 years, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that there are hundreds of millions of dollars that these Crowns have given to the people of Saskatchewan.

And if you look at the, as I mentioned at the outset, if you look at their role in the economy, the importance of our Crowns, when companies look to where they want to invest, yes, tax rates are important. Yes, royalties are also a critical factor. The availability of a trained labour force is also a key component in their assessment. But, Mr. Speaker, affordability of licensing services such as cellphones or having the technology at your fingertips, well, guess what? SaskTel provides that. So don't they think in the Sask Party ranks that those offer incredible value to our province overall?

We're a landlocked province that has been counting on agriculture to be the mainstay of our economy for years. We need to expand beyond agriculture and become a centre for mining expertise, Mr. Speaker. We need to expand to become a centre for green technology, Mr. Speaker. We need to become a centre for all kinds of opportunities, Mr. Speaker, at the private sector.

But the problem is, the problem is, is the so-called free enterprise party across the way just can't figure it out. They just can't figure it out, Mr. Speaker. The message the people of Saskatchewan have is, don't sell our Crowns. Leave our Crowns alone. And if those right wingers can't get it over there . . . They claim to be right wingers, Mr. Speaker. All they understand is they want to sell off the Crowns. It's ingrained in their philosophical beliefs that everything that's not nailed down to the floor, they should have a wall-to-wall sale of it. That's their belief, Mr. Speaker.

And when you begin to look at the practice of the Sask Party in the past, this is one of the reasons why on our side of the Assembly, we don't buy it for one bit that they don't have a plan to weaken our Crowns, to have the Crowns debt ridden so it's very easy for them to be able to sell off these Crowns, telling the people of Saskatchewan that they're losing money. And that's a shame, Mr. Speaker, because these Crowns have taken years to build and, Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely shameful that a party that's supposed to be promising not to do that, does that a year into their last election. And, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have a long memory.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before, as I indicated before, the last 10 years . . . This is a memo to the backbenchers, the backbenchers of the Sask Party. Some of them should know it but some of them don't want to share it. In the last 10 years, from 2006, we have collected over \$3 billion in dividends in the Crown corporations — \$3 billion. That's enough to do two of your bypasses, you guys. You know, and the fact of the matter is that you need to get the memo. You need to get the memo that the Crown corporations should not be for sale, should not be for sale, but yet you're blindly following, you're blindly following the leader of your party that says that they're not for sale, yet they're entertaining offers.

So if you don't believe in the sale of these Crowns, then maybe

tell your House Leader or the minister responsible to pull that bill, pull that bill, because that bill is simply something that allows them to do exactly what we're saying that they shouldn't be doing without even having a referendum. The bill certainly points that out, Mr. Speaker, and this is where I think it's important that people ought to pay attention to what's going on in the Assembly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to turn a bit of my attention towards the debt of the Crown corporations. Now the province itself overall, Mr. Speaker, we know on Wednesday next that there's going to be a provincial budget. We're seeing that now the Sask Party is talking about taxes. Now the Premier's tweeting about taxes. That's something that they said they would never do, Mr. Speaker, they would never do. And we're asking them, well we think that you didn't have to raise taxes if you would've managed the economy properly. We think you would've not had to raise taxes because of all your scandals. And we think you wouldn't have to raise taxes because of all your waste.

That's where the problem is. It's waste, scandals, and mismanagement that the Sask Party have been accustomed to, Mr. Speaker. That's become their MO [modus operandi], Mr. Speaker, because obviously people of Saskatchewan watch very carefully what's going on.

And I want to point out here in 2008, Mr. Speaker, the debt for Saskatchewan was \$10.5 billion. It's the year after they . . . the fact that when they assumed office and then, Mr. Speaker, it dropped to 7.9. You know why it dropped to 7.9, Mr. Speaker? Because the Sask Party all of a sudden found \$2 billion in the bank that left it in by the previous administration.

[16:30]

So what the Premier did, he said, hey I'll put out these billboards throughout Saskatchewan and I'll say, look we dropped the debt by 40 per cent after one year in office. Look how amazing we are. And that's exactly what they did. They took out billboards saying, did you know we reduced our debt by 40 per cent? And yet the first few months after he became elected, the Premier got up and he said, I told the media, oh the finances are stark. That's what he said: finances are stark, cupboards are bare, he said. And less than a year later he pays down 40 per cent of the debt.

And how did he do that, Mr. Speaker? Was there some cookies in a cookie jar somewhere? Did they find some money somewhere that someone mysteriously gave us — \$2 billion to put the debt down by 40 per cent?

But see, Mr. Speaker, that's the problem with the Sask Party is that they'll do something of that sort, but what they refuse to tell the people of Saskatchewan is that that money was left in there by the previous NDP administration, alongside of the people of Saskatchewan's hard work.

We'll never, ever forget the fact that the people of Saskatchewan stuck with us through those years, through those tough years, to make some of those tough choices to make sure that we recaptured the spirit and intent of managing all parts of our economy. And that includes the Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, because they are an incredible, valuable asset to the

people of Saskatchewan. There's a lot of history behind our Crowns. There's a lot of workers that are affected by our Crowns. There's a lot of good stories of how our Crown corporations have built Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, despite having governments like the conservatives across the way.

Now, Mr. Speaker, during that time, during that time when they included not only the provincial debt but also the Crown debt, Mr. Speaker, somehow the Premier found it mysteriously possible to reduce the debt by \$2 billion without giving the NDP any credit. He said, well we're going to do this. And they took out billboards all throughout the city. I remember those billboards, Mr. Speaker.

Well here we are, Mr. Speaker, a bare eight years later and debt now is expected to be \$16 billion very soon. And this is a party, Mr. Speaker, that is still bent, still bent on getting rid of the Crowns, the same Crowns that gave us \$3 billion in revenues over the past 10 years. And that's the whole crux of our argument across the way when it comes to Bill 40, is do not sell the Crowns. They help provide employment to the people of Saskatchewan. They help provide revenue so we can keep our taxes low and competitive. They provide services. And they do this all in very reasonable cost.

So what is the issue around this bill? Why is Bill 40 being presented? What is that about, Mr. Speaker? That is a fundamental question that we have around Bill 40. It just does not make any sense from what the Premier states on one day versus what this bill brings forward the following day.

So the bill states very clearly that if this bill is passed, then a referendum is no longer required. And this is where I think the backbenchers of the Sask Party better wake up, because if that's what you're being told, that it'll be a referendum, then you better wake up. Because there's going to be some rude awakenings here if this bill is passed through, and all of a sudden a year from now you find out that the Sask Party is entitled to sell a portion of SaskTel without going to a public referendum.

And we don't want to hear, oh I didn't know that, on that side, Mr. Speaker. We're giving you the update now. We can forward to you a memo that clearly states the intent behind your bill. And I think some of the backbenchers should read it, Mr. Speaker. They should read that bill very, very closely and clearly to make sure they know exactly what the intent behind that bill is.

Because history will show, history will show, Mr. Speaker, who was in the Sask Party benches when this was allowed to happen. And history will be very swift, Mr. Speaker, and it will be very just. And the names of the current backbenchers that are sitting on their hands hoping this goes away, well they'll be part of the history, Mr. Speaker, as to those that led the demise of our Crown corporations and therefore squandered the future of Saskatchewan for decades to come.

Now going back to the copy of the debt, Mr. Speaker, it shows under the Sask Party government that a lot of the debt is being pushed onto the Crown sector, Mr. Speaker. And this is kind of the reason why I think it's really important to note, is that how are the Crowns managed overall? And we talk about the smart

meter fiasco; we talk about the carbon capture technology. How are the Crowns managed overall?

What we're seeing, Mr. Speaker, is the Sask Party is taking more dividends out. As we've mentioned, it took out 3 billion the last three years, and they're saddling the Crown corporations with more debt. So you look at the graph and it shows, quite frankly, the debt of the Crown corporations, debt of government business enterprises being \$3.4 billion, Mr. Speaker, when they took over office. Now, Mr. Speaker, it is almost three times that, at \$9.7 billion. Our Crown corporations owe about \$10 billion as a result of the Sask Party's record.

So as you look at this whole notion . . . And I've gone through at length some of the arguments around the legal ramifications of inviting minority shareholders. We spoke about that. We spoke about the history of the Crowns, Mr. Speaker. We spoke about the value of the Crowns. We spoke about the dividends that the Crowns give us. We spoke about the services, Mr. Speaker, and now we go back to the argument. What agenda does the Sask Party have for our Crown corporations? What agenda? We on the opposition side say right now the Sask Party is saddling the Crown corporations with a lot of debt. They are saddling the Crown corporations with a lot of debt. This interpretation bill, the interpretation bill really is just the preface to what I think is going on across the way, is that there is an agenda to get rid of the Crowns. They want to sell the Crowns, make no mistake about that.

And how you do it, Mr. Speaker, is that many people say, oh well, the NDP have their theories, but we don't believe in theories. We want to see real practical advice and real tangible information or evidence. But, Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out, the debt, the debt for the Crown corporations under the Sask Party has almost tripled in the last eight, nine years.

And, Mr. Speaker, the idea that the Crown corporations is, you make them suffer incredible debt load, which the Crown corporations are facing right now. And then you put a lot of political interference, whether it's the smart meter fiasco, whether it's the carbon capture technology, or whether it's the bypass process to P3s [public-private partnership]. All of these things, Mr. Speaker, are costing a lot of money.

And all the Sask Party is doing is hiding some of that debt in the Crowns, punting that debt down the road to P3s, Mr. Speaker. And who's going to pay the costs in the future? History will show that it was this government, this leader, this caucus that put Saskatchewan in a huge problem, in a huge deficit and huge debt. History will show that through P3s they have really tied the future of any projects in the province. Any projects in the province will be dictated by P3s. We won't have any money to expand on any front in the future of our province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when I talk about the Crown debt, it all goes back to Bill 40. If you look at the public debt, it's supposed to be forecasted to be rising again this year. We talked about three and a half billion dollars the last two years and that is something that is a remarkable underachievement by a government when they inherit, when they inherit \$2 billion in the bank and they inherit a booming economy, when they inherit a growing population and they get record revenue. Never enjoyed in the history of Saskatchewan's politics has any

government enjoyed record revenue as much as the Sask Party. They had money coming to them steady, Mr. Speaker, and yet a bare eight years later, where are we at? We're now facing more debt. Where are we at? We've seen our Crowns being increased debt three times since they've assumed government. Where we're seeing . . . We're seeing 40,000 less people working when they first assumed office, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, the bad part of this is you cannot sell the Crowns to cover up your mismanagement because that's the final nail in the coffin in Saskatchewan's future if our Crowns are sold and we see the Sask Party get their way through Bill 40. Mr. Speaker, we will never, ever get these Crowns back again. And that's the stark message we have from the people of Saskatchewan and despite what the Premier may say. And that's one of the reasons why we argue on this side of the Assembly. We argue as much as we can. We raise our points as much as we can.

The only true way, the only true way that you can say you have the confidence of the people of Saskatchewan on the future of our Crowns is to have an election over it. And the history of Saskatchewan . . . Let's not wait for a mildly worded or a question on a referendum form, Mr. Speaker. Let's have an election on this. Let's have an election on the future of our Crowns to see if the Saskatchewan people want to sell them.

And, Mr. Speaker, as evidenced in the last two elections, the Premier doesn't have the courage to run against the notion of keeping our Crowns because the people of Saskatchewan will certainly speak loud and clear. And I think that the backbenchers across the way, Mr. Speaker, they know very well, they know very well what the people of Saskatchewan are saying, and they know very well what their constituents are saying. And they're saying loud and clear: leave our Crown corporations alone.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the question around the debt, and I want to go to the Crown sector debt. If you look at the Crowns having their debt increased by three times what it was under the Sask Party to go from 3.6 to almost \$10 billion in debt, the question I would have is that, how is a Crown corporation that's put that deep in debt, how could you sell it for its maximum value, Mr. Speaker? It's just not possible. It's just that we have a company that has a lot of debt. All of a sudden the value of potential sale of that asset becomes highly questionable. So from the logic perspective, Bill 40 says we're just having an interpretation but we're not allowing no referendum. That's what the bill says.

But at the same time, when you look at the Crowns and the potential sale of the Crowns, as you're increasing the debt for the Crowns, how could you then justify them selling the Crowns for top dollar if they're laden with all this debt? So in many ways, a potential buyer or person might be interested in SaskTel or SaskPower. Well they're going to be immediately turned off by the amount of debt being placed on this Crown corporation by the government.

So is that going to reduce the value of the Crowns overall? Everything that the Saskatchewan Party has done to our Crowns has devalued the work and ethics and the commitment and desire that all the employees have for our Crowns. Every single thing that they have done has devalued and really has

squandered the potential opportunity for the Saskatchewan Crown corporations in our province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I also want to point out that there was . . . There's a comment I want to use. There was a comment that I want to use, and this was going back to November 22nd, 2004. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out this is going back as far as 13 years ago and they're still singing the same song. That's why it was so funny for us. But anyway, Mr. Speaker, the speaker at the time was a gentleman by the name of Mr. Elhard, and this is what he said:

The Saskatchewan Party, like the majority of Saskatchewan people, believe the major Crowns should stay in public hands. We believe that the major Crowns and their employees do an excellent job of providing services to the people of Saskatchewan. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we have no problem [in] supporting this bill.

And that bill, Mr. Speaker, was the bill introduced by the NDP government saying that we would not allow our Crowns to be sold. So they, since 2004, have stated that, and yet today we're still having the debate of what they would interpret it as sale is 49 per cent sale of our Crown. Is that considered a sale? Well I'll tell the people of Saskatchewan, minority share or majority share, a sale is a sale is a sale. And that's why we like using that phrase out here, a Tory is a Tory is a Tory, Mr. Speaker.

They are determined to sell our Crowns. There's no question about it in our minds. How they do it, Mr. Speaker, and who does it for them, I think in the long run it's going to be . . . Where I think they want to take the argument is going to be from the debates in the Assembly and the debates in our hometown and the discussions in some town halls. They want to take that argument from that particular venue, Mr. Speaker, and they want to put it in some foreign court somewhere that may interpret minority shareholder rights much more so than our local interests and investments in the Crown corporations. That's what I predict that the Sask Party want to do. They want to take it from the floor of the Assembly, where these things should be debated, and have an international court decide whether this minority shareholder sale is valid or not.

[16:45]

And, Mr. Speaker, that's why these bills should never come forward, simply because the people of Saskatchewan didn't ask them to run on this. They didn't give them the majority to run on this, and that's why they're saying, Mr. Speaker, that we have to have an election on this. A referendum is not what we want to see. We want to have an election on this, and I don't know what the Sask Party is so afraid of, of going back to the people on this particular front.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've had a number of people that have done really good evaluations on SaskPower and SaskTel. There is people that have impeccable professional achievements that have gone through a number of scenarios as it pertains to the Crown corporations because obviously this debate around the Crowns has been around for a long time. There are different organizations, there are think tanks, there are scholars, there are institutions, there are business people, there are large multinational corporations that have looked at the Crowns for

years. They have looked at the Crowns for years, and so a lot of them have researched what are some of the possibilities.

And I want to get a bit into that, Mr. Speaker, as the evening goes on, as to what some of these people have indicated as for a number of different important headlines. Like one of the arguments around rationale for divestiture or privatization, is there a difference there? Well obviously, Mr. Speaker, when you divest yourself of a particular asset and the privatization could have a different interpretation, we need to know what that means. There are options for divestiture or privatization of SaskTel or SaskPower, and there's different ways that some of these very learned people have kind of researched for the people of Saskatchewan to try and understand.

I'm going to share this with a couple of the backbenchers, Mr. Speaker, because I think they may need to read up on this stuff. Because little do they realize as they sit there and they applaud away is that: yes, to a certain extent, we understand, you've got to have faith in your leader and your message, but blind faith doesn't serve you well. You've got to know what's being planned for the corporations, for the Crown corporations, and if you don't, then you become the problem. And that's why I think the Sask Party backbenchers should finally find their backbone and start asking questions as it pertains to the Crown corporations and what the agenda is as the Sask Party executive have planned for our Crowns.

So, Mr. Speaker, these are all a lot of information that they've compiled. I want to share some of that information this evening. Some of it's around SaskTel. Some of it's around SaskPower. And they look at the growth rate. They look at a number of scenarios. They look at the cost of equity or the required rate of return because obviously people that are going to invest in this company want to be able to return dollars. It's not going to be purchased at a price where they don't see the return happen very quickly.

And they do an average of the six highlighted best estimates, Mr. Speaker. And then they do a graph. There's all kinds of graphs. There's financial statements, Mr. Speaker. There's a balance sheet. There's liabilities. There's a cash flow statement analysis. And the list goes on. And I'm talking about a number of graphs that the average layperson would take at least several months to try and interpret, Mr. Speaker. Well these highly skilled people have done that for us, and they've given us a lot of scenarios of whether we should be selling off the Crowns or not.

But I tell the people of Saskatchewan this, is that you're going to have a lot of debate back and forth from a number of different organizations, and that's why the interpretation of the word "privatization" is so, so important. What does that mean? The vaguely announced World Bank interpretation of privatization was alluded to in this particular bill, Mr. Speaker. Well we need to find . . . Who made that decision to get the World Bank's interpretation of privatization? Which of the Sask Party ministers decided to go to the World Bank and get their interpretation of privatization because privatization from a different organization or a different brain trust may be radically different.

Again it depends on your perspective and it depends on your

interpretation of what privatization means. Is 1 per cent privatization under the World Bank or is 10 per cent privatization?

So, Mr. Speaker, as we look at the whole notion around what the Sask Party has in this particular bill, the biggest argument I would make is that if the Sask Party is committing to the people of Saskatchewan to not sell the Crowns, then they must remove this bill. Bill 40 has got to go. That's the only true way that we believe that they're serious about their statement.

If they don't want to withdraw Bill 40, the other option we have for them as an opposition is, let's call an election on this particular bill. Let's call an election on this particular issue and see if they have the courage, Mr. Speaker, courage to call an election on this particular bill because we certainly do. We have the conviction and courage on this side of the Assembly to run an election on the Crown corporations to see if Saskatchewan people want to keep them. And, Mr. Speaker, I know the Sask Party won't do it because they hid the deficit from the people of Saskatchewan before the last election. And we sit there, and they're all wondering, the people of Saskatchewan are wondering why did they call an election before the budget?

Well everybody this side of the Assembly knew why. We knew why, Mr. Speaker. And now we're finding evidence that not only the Finance minister but the Premier and a collect few in the front benches there knew the exact state of our finances. And I dare say, Mr. Speaker, they kept a lot of that information away from the backbenchers because if the backbenchers didn't know, then, Mr. Speaker, they couldn't respond to it.

So we know on this side of the Assembly that there was a high-level amount of manipulation that went on. They were very, very quiet about the process because they didn't want the people of Saskatchewan to know how bad things were. And, Mr. Speaker, primary to them, the people that are building this Saskatchewan Party process, that want to build their party up, Mr. Speaker, they had to keep this information not only from the people of Saskatchewan but from the backbenchers themselves. And that, Mr. Speaker, is a crying shame because if the third term for the current Premier was so important that he had to not bring this information forward to the people of Saskatchewan, well then shame on him.

But the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, have a long memory. They will not forget. And I dare say today that a lot of the backbenchers that sat there gleefully clapping and cheering as some of the processes were unfolding, Mr. Speaker, they were privy to that. They were a party to that. But they can stand up today and they can argue back on the Crown corporations and they can finally found their own courage and their own backbone to stand up and tell their leader of their party to back off on any notion of selling off our Crowns because we have seen that the Crowns offer some great benefits to the people of Saskatchewan.

And this is why, this is why today as an opposition member I'm appealing to the backbench again to find their backbone, to stand up. Because once the SaskPower and SaskTel and SGI are sold, we can never get them back. It is a very important, pivotal part in the history of Saskatchewan. And this bill does some of that. This bill does some of that. It sets the stage. It allows

different avenues and venues for the privatization of our Crowns. So the backbench have got to wake up. They've got to wake up. They've got to find their backbone, and they've got to tell the front bench to leave the Crowns alone because the people of Saskatchewan will not, will not simply accept that as something that is going to happen without their involvement.

So I warned the people of Saskatchewan on a number of fronts, Mr. Speaker. We need the people of Saskatchewan to get active on this file. We need you to pay attention to what the Sask Party is trying to do with our Crowns. We have stood here day after day extolling the virtues of our Crowns, the values of our Crowns, what they have done to our economy, the history of the Crowns, the workers, the services, the pricing — it is all good stuff for the people of Saskatchewan. And the message we have for you is that once it is sold, once it is sold, it is gone forever. And that's the stark message we have.

And that's why when we have Bill 40 that comes up that simply, according to the minister, states that we want to find a definition for privatization, as I said, well what's that all about? What is that all about? Why would you want to find a definition of privatization if you have no intention of privatizing anything? Why would you want to get the definition in place? And why is it in this particular bill you have the clause that if you get this bill passed, a referendum wouldn't be necessary.

Now that's not our interpretation of the bill, Mr. Speaker. That was the media. They pointed that out. As part of the bill process in the introduction of the bill, the media simply stated that this bill would allow the privatization agenda to proceed without a referendum. So why would the Premier be offering a referendum on the sale of any Crowns when Bill 40 says that you don't have to do that? So that's one of the reasons why, Mr. Speaker, we do not have any confidence, nor do we have faith in the Sask Party or any of the leaders of the Sask Party over there when they talk about privatization overall.

So rest assured that we are going to have a lot more discussions on the myths behind the Sask Party's agenda when it comes to our Crowns, Mr. Speaker. We're going to have a lot of compelling evidence and argument around the value of the Crowns, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue challenging the Sask Party to an election, never mind a weakly worded referendum that may or may not happen. Let's have an election on this. I think the people of Saskatchewan at least deserve that decent response, Mr. Speaker. I think they'll speak in volumes saying, when it comes to our Crowns, they are not for sale, what the people of Saskatchewan would say, and you keep your hands off them because every time the Sask Party touches anything, Mr. Speaker, they put everything in debt.

And today now they want to sell the Crowns to pay off some of that debt. And what's planned for that money? I can tell you right now, it's not going to be towards building a brighter future for the province. Because quite frankly, if our Crowns are sold, Mr. Speaker, then the future of our province certainly is being compromised, and that's why it's an important argument to have.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I said, as I resume debate this evening on this particular bill, there are many more angles that I want to bring forward and I will bring forward. But as I said at the

outset, if the Sask Party has the courage to call an election on this particular issue, on the privatization of the Crowns, then I don't think we need to go on a half-hearted argument under Bill 40. Let's talk about interpretation. Let's talk about a referendum.

I say let's get it on. Let's have an election on this matter. We're ready to go, Mr. Speaker, and I can say to you that the Sask Party, the Sask Party will not go back to the people because they don't . . . They didn't have the courage to go back to them on the deficit. They certainly won't have the courage to go back to the public on the future of our Crowns because, Mr. Speaker, that's not the word that I would chose when it comes to the Sask Party. Courage would be the last word that I would chose to describe the Sask Party and its governing tactics here in the province in Saskatchewan.

So as I said, this evening we've got some great information coming forward. I think people will be pleasantly surprised while the opposition . . . The backbenchers will finally get some of the information that they've been lacking for years, as we point out, as we point out what their agenda is all about.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's going to get very interesting tonight because I think my advice to the Sask Party backbenchers is stay, stick around. We've got a lot more information coming your way, and that debate will resume at 7 this evening, Mr. Speaker. And I'll read into the record their names of those that didn't get it. And, Mr. Speaker, I think we'll find out that quite frankly there is going to be 49 people across the way that simply just didn't get it. And we will get rid of them the next election, Mr. Speaker. That's our plan; that's our strategy.

So I'll say before I resume at 7 tonight, leave our Crowns alone. The people of Saskatchewan want to keep them, Mr. Speaker, and that's what's . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Thankfully it is 5 o'clock. This House stands recessed until 7 p.m.

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

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Premier

President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

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Minister of Social Services
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission

Hon. Kevin Doherty
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Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
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